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NEWLY ENLISTED.

A SERIES OF TALKS

WITH

YOUNG CONVERTS.

BY

THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.,

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TO MY BELOVED FRIEND

Dwight L. Moody,

WHOSE SINGLE AIM IS TO LEAD SOULS TO JESUS,

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NEWLY ENLISTED.

NEWLY ENLISTED.

DURING a public ministry which has extended beyond forty years I have been brought into contact with thousands of persons who were just commencing the Christian life. No portion of that life is more vitally important than its early stages. A new convert to Christ—whether he or she is young in years or not—has had but a very limited experience; and experience is like the stern-light of a vessel; it only shows the path that has already been sailed over. But every voyager may profit by the experiences of others who have sailed the same track and encountered the same difficulties or perils. Every word of counsel therefore which is in accordance with

God's Book and with the actual lives of his people may be of great value to those who are just setting out. It is my aim in the following pages to present a few such frank and fatherly counsels. Some of the chapters may be equally applicable to those who are farther advanced in Christian growth. But my chief aim is to reach and to instruct those who have *newly enlisted* in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear friends, you must bear in mind that conversion is simply an enlisting in the army of Jesus. The battles and the hard bivouacs are yet before you. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." We want to impress it upon the mind of every young convert that the real conflict has only begun, and they have done no more than to put on their armor and enroll their names. Supposing you to be truly regenerated by the divine Spirit, what next?

We would reply that the sowing-time of your spiritual spring has just begun. Don't repeat the current prattle about being a "harvested

soul gathered into the garner." The church is not a granary. You are just beginning to sow for yourself; and whatsoever you sow you will surely reap. You are forming new habits of thinking and acting. You are an utterly inexperienced beginner in an entirely new line of life. The first year of your Christian life will have a mighty influence on all your future. Many a wedlock has been spoiled by a bad honeymoon. Many a promising convert has been ruined by an unhappy start, or at least his hopes of spiritual power and usefulness have been blasted.

Begin with a determination to learn Christ's will and to do it. This is what that famous convert near Damascus was aiming at when he inquired so anxiously, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" It is very well to know what a Bunyan or a Finney or a Moody has written or said about the Christian life. But go to the fountainhead. Go to Jesus in a humble, docile spirit and ask him in fervent prayer to guide you. Bend your will to his will. He is perfectly will-

ing to guide the meek and the teachable in the right way. I honestly believe that, when a docile heart sincerely asks to be led and then obeys the voice of conscience, that heart seldom takes a false step; yea, never does. Jesus promises to lead you in the way of all truth. Trust him.

Conscience is the vital point. You need not trouble yourself much about your feelings or your frames as long as conscience turns as steadily towards Christ as the needle towards the North Pole. It is the office of conscience to detect sin and righteousness, to decide for one and to reject the other. Feelings are very fallacious. Some Christians are very devout in their feelings and wretchedly deficient in their daily conduct. They forget that the best proof of love to Christ is to "keep his commandments." Fervent Christians in the prayer-meeting, they are sorry specimens of Christians outside of it. There is a lamentable lack of conscience in too much of the flaming piety which burns out all its oil in the prayer-room or the "praise-meeting." We do not wonder at the sneers which are often levelled by

shrewd men of the world at this sort of "revival religion." See to it that you give no occasion for such sneers. See to it that Jesus is not betrayed before his enemies by your inconsistency. The best thing you can do for your Saviour and your Master is to live an honest, truthful, pure, and godly life. Others are watching you. Then watch over yourself.

In putting on your armor don't forget that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Be not content with merely reading your Bible; study it. Instead of skimming over whole acres of truth, put your spade into the most practical passages and dig deep. Study the twenty-fifth Psalm and the twelfth chapter of Romans, as well as the sublime eighth chapter. Study the whole Epistle of James. It will teach you how a Christian ought to behave before the world. As you get on farther you may strike your hoe and your mattock down into the rich ore-beds of the book of John. Saturate your heart with God's Word.

As for your field of Christian work, you ought

not to have much trouble about that. Follow God's leadings and go into the first field of labor which opens to you. Do not seek easy posts or those which will flatter vanity. Brave Mary Lyon used to tell her pupils at Mount Holyoke to "go where no one else was willing to go." Threescore of her graduates became missionaries for Christ Jesus. As soon as you begin to think that you are too good for your place, then the place is too good for you. Do what you can do best. A converted inebriate in my congregation has found his field in a praying band for the reformation of drunkards. While you are working for the Master do not neglect the inner life of your own soul. If you do not keep the fountain well filled with love of Jesus, the stream of your activities will run dry as soon as the novelty is over.

Your daily battle will be with the sins that most easily beset you. The serpent often scotched is not killed. Paul himself had to give his carnal appetites the "black eye" pretty often. You will never get your discharge from this war with

the old Adam until you enter heaven. The moment you fall asleep the Philistines will be upon you. Challenge every tempter that approaches you. The dangerous devil is the one that wears the white robe and cozens you with a smooth tongue.

Finally, strive to be a Christian man everywhere. Carry the savor of your communion with Christ wherever you go. Jacob brought into his old blind father's presence such an odor of the barley-ground and the vineyard that he had "the smell of a field which the Lord had blessed." Every place you enter ought to be the better for your presence. Never disappoint the expectation of your Master. He is the best master in the universe. Having put on the uniform of his glorious service, wear it until you are laid in your coffin. Carry his banner up to the heavenly gate. When Death calls your name on the roll be ready to answer, "Here!"

ENLISTING FOR LIFE.

MANY of my readers may be agitating the question in their minds, Ought I to enlist publicly in the service of Jesus Christ and unite with his church? A vitally important question this for all who are considering it; a very important one also for parents and teachers to whom the young may apply for counsel in regard to such a decisive step. An immense majority of those who unite with our churches by confession of faith are under twenty-five years of age. The impulsiveness and the inexperience of youth are elements of danger; on the other hand, the fact that the young have not yet rooted down so deeply into old habits of sin is an element of hopeful encouragement. Every pastor can find on his muster-roll more or less names of those who enlisted for Christ and then drifted away as deserters. The list of the wounded and

"missing" is sadly large in almost every large church. The time for careful inspection on the part of a pastor and for thorough self-inspection on the part of the candidate is the time of enlistment.

The first question of all with you, my friend, if you propose such an important step, is this: Have I joined my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have I been born into a new life by his Spirit? Have I found in him what my soul most needs, and surrendered that soul, without any reservations, to his keeping and control? The heart union to Christ must precede any public union with his church. If you will turn to an unnoticed incident in Old Testament history, you will see an illustration of what I mean. Ittai of Gath, a blunt honest soldier, led his regiment of Gittites in review before King David at a very critical time during Absalom's rebellion. The old king frankly and generously tells him that there is danger ahead if he enlists for the campaign. But the plucky Philistine has so knit his heart to the exiled monarch that his prompt re-

ply is: "As the Lord liveth and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there also will thy servant be." That solemn oath of loyalty came from the heart. If others turn traitors, Ittai means to *stick*. He can die for the "old flag," but he will never desert. A few days later on, and the body-guard of Gittites with the valiant Ittai at their head, march back triumphantly into Jerusalem, bringing the exiled David to his palace and his throne.

The prime essential with you is that you shall put your Saviour just where that loyal soldier put his sovereign—in the core of your heart. You must be ready to say, "Wherever Christ leads, I will follow; whatever he commands, I will obey." For bear in mind that the chief thing you do when you enlist in Christ's service is not to subscribe to a system of sound doctrine (important though that may be), but to confess Jesus as your Saviour and Lord and to pledge to him lifelong loyalty and obedience. You join your weakness to his strength, your ignorance to

his wisdom, your unworthiness to his merits, your interests to his oversight, your poverty to his resources, your whole self to his service. If you do that sincerely, Christ becomes responsible for you. He will provide for you spiritual armor. He will furnish you the daily rations of truth and grace to feed you. His precious promise is, "My grace is sufficient for you." His guaranty is, "No man shall pluck you out of my hands; because I live ye shall live also." Christ accepts no volunteer for six months or for a single campaign. If you enlist, you must *enlist for life.* On the blade of that sword of the Spirit which the Captain of your salvation hands to you is inscribed: "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved."

But you may inquire, "Just how ought I to feel and just what should I be when I take the lifelong obligation of church membership on myself?" God's Word gives a very brief answer when it declares that if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved. This inward faith must be evidenced by daily conduct. My

own custom as a pastor is to put into the hands of every applicant for admission into the church a brief statement of the nature of church membership and the following six questions: 1. Have you seen yourself to be a sinner against God? 2. Have you not only repented of your sins and sought forgiveness, but do you hate all manner of sin and pray to be delivered from its dominion? 3. Is your hope of acceptance with God founded upon the Lord Jesus as your atoning Saviour, and upon him only? 4. Have you given your heart to Christ, and are you willing to follow him whithersoever he shall lead you? 5. Is it your honest purpose—in reliance on his grace—to cleave to Christ as your Redeemer and your Guide to the end of life? 6. In order to maintain your Christian life do you conscienciously practise the duties of prayer and the study of God's Word as your daily rule of conduct?

You will notice that these interrogatories imply an enlistment for life. Also that they embrace the two core ideas of Christianity, which are *to abhor sin and to love Christ*—to turn from

sin and to follow Christ. These seem to my mind to be the Scriptural evidences of regeneration. The new life in your soul may as yet be very feeble; it may be only the weak pulse-beat of an infant; the blade of grace may, like the blades of grass in May, be very small; but if the life imparted by Jesus *is there*, then you may strengthen it by an open confession of Him. When Christ bestows converting grace he demands confession. Love prompts it. A fire kindled in a stove reports itself; concealment is impossible. If nobody among your associates ever suspects or supposes that you are a Christian, then you ought to doubt if you are one. Be honest with yourself and with God. Ask him to search you and to guide you aright; and if after self-examination and testing you are persuaded that Jesus Christ has begun to live in your soul, then openly enlist in his service. "Do you think that you love Christ?" I asked a young convert recently. The prompt answer was, "I *know* it." Why should he not know it; for love is a conscious emotion and act of the heart. Do

not hold back because enlisting for Christ involves responsibility and will excite the watchful observation of others. You *need that;* witnesses are intended to be watched and examined. If enlistment puts you into hard battles, all the better. Cowards and shirks win no victories and wear no crowns.

Pitch your standard high and then push on and fight on up to your colors. Do not be disheartened by some failures and repulses; there is no soldier who has not known some defeats. Peter was badly defeated in Pilate's hall; but it made him a more watchful and a stronger warrior ever afterward. In religion as in war, it is going "under fire" that makes the true soldier. The Bible phrase "a perfect man" really signifies a *full-grown* man, but how can you reach that unless you begin?

Do you desire to be on Christ's side at the Day of Judgment? Then enlist on that side now, and say to your Master, "Lord, wherever thou art, whether in life or death, there will thy servant be!"

HOW MUCH HAVE YOU GOT?

"How many loaves have ye?" was our Lord's question to his disciples as he was confronted by a hungry multitude on the far shore of Gennesareth. He might have brought down a shower of manna from the heavens or called up a miraculous growth of laden fruit-trees from the earth. But he never displayed a wanton superfluity of power; to make the utmost of what they had was a lesson he often taught to his followers. The disciples reply to him that they have only seven loaves and a few little fishes. He immediately seats the crowd and begins to distribute the scanty supply, which wonderfully increases in his hands, and again increases still more in the hands of the distributers, until the whole four thousand are satisfied. Here was a miracle of creative power, for at the end of the feast there are seven rope-hampers filled with the yet untasted food.

An admirable lesson does this deed of mercy teach to every new convert at the very start. How much have you got already? Then, with the Spirit's help, strive to make it more. This is the lesson for you to learn and to put into prompt practice. You have discovered a new and fresh truth in some texts of God's Book. Let this slight taste of the sweetness and *meatiness* of the Bible stimulate you to wider and deeper study. A Bible-diet strengthens for Bible-duty. To a certain degree you have been convicted of your own sinfulness, and have exercised some degree of penitence. Probe deeper yet; pray for more thorough self-knowledge, and lop off unsparingly every sin that doth easily beset or entrap you. It is a shocking mistake for young converts to imagine that they have done up their repentance once for all. Friend, those two men had got many stages on their journey who gave utterance to the fifty-first Psalm and the seventh chapter to the Romans. Have you opened your lips in a prayer-meeting or to an unconverted friend, or laid hold of some effort to do good?

Then don't be discouraged by your poor success; push on, and find that there is downright luxury in shaming down self and trying to serve Christ. Your faith may yet be a mere sprout or bulb; but just as nature is busy in evolving into growth the roots and seeds and bulbs *she has* (not in trying to create new ones), so be thou busy in exercising the faith thou hast and asking Jesus to enlarge it. Observe that Christ said to his disciples, "Bring the loaves hither to me." So you must take all your faculties, all your gifts, all your endeavors—yes, and all your poor insufficiencies—right to your Master.

Having a capital of grace to start with, determine to increase it. If one had asked young John Jacob Astor, the German emigrant, "How much have you got?" he would have replied, "Nothing but my brains and my hands." A little later he might have said, "I have laid up one thousand dollars." But out of the seven loaves and few fishes of his scanty youth grew the magnificent possessions of real estate that made him the richest man of his day in America.

You have got to become "rich towards God" by the same simple principle of economically using the gifts which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon you. Every answered prayer must increase your faith to pray. Every slip you make, every tumble through carelessness or self-confidence, should teach you to walk more circumspectly. All the satisfaction you feel in being a young beginner for Christ should fire you to become a larger, deeper, wiser, holier Christian. A rock has been smitten in your heart by the hand of Christ, and it has begun to give out streams. Remember that he who smote the rock that the waters gushed out can give you bread also for your whole life-journey. I beg you do not be satisfied with a dwarfish piety. Some converts never grow an inch; they are planted in the church and then stunted for life. Their seven loaves get stale and dry and their few little fishes shrivel up; if they had been distributed in God's service they would have multiplied.

Diffusion brings increase. The more you give, the fuller-handed you are. If Andrew or

Peter had slipped off out of the crowd with a piece of barley-loaf and said, "I will make sure of this for myself," they would have had only that morsel, and when it was gone there were nothing for anybody else. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth, and it tends to penury. I wish I had the space to write out here the history of a certain gold coin which a poor, hard-toiling young girl gave to the Lord; it would be a beautiful illustration of the multiplication of one loaf into a basketful of blessings. Sow plentifully if you want a harvest. You are serving a generous Master. The harder you work, the better pay; the more you do for Jesus, the more you will love him.

I verily believe that the richest joys of heaven will be the simple *enlargement* of what we are on earth. The few original loaves will be multiplied. The joys of household love will be perpetuated and purified. The thirst for divine knowledge will be infinitely increased and satisfied. Whatever we did for Jesus here will be

our "treasure in heaven" when we get there. Death is not the end of serving Christ; it is only the transfer to a higher and wider realm in which they all "serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them." If we have desires after holiness here, we shall there attain unto the spotless robe and to the perfect likeness of our Lord. The faint glimpses of Jesus here, as "through a glass darkly," will then become the enrapturing sight of the King in his beauty. All this exceeding weight of glory will only be the natural outcome and enlargement of what began here *when we began with Christ, and he in us.* Then, young friend, how many loaves have you to start with? See to it that they are all brought to your Master, and by the multiplication-table of grace you will bless others around you and have several full hampers for heaven.

GIRDING THE LOINS.

"WHEREFORE, gird up the loins of your mind," is the stirring exhortation of that same enthusiastic disciple who had once girded his fisherman's tunic about him and leaped out of the boat to swim to his Master. The ancients, as our readers know, were accustomed to wear loose, flowing garments, and when any strenuous exertion was required, they gathered the folds of their drapery and bound a girdle about their waist. A spiritual process similar to this is essential to a vigorous, effective Christian life.

Jesus Christ does not put you or me into his church just to make us comfortable. Nor is getting to heaven the sole object or even the chief object of becoming a Christian. *Obedience to Jesus Christ* is the first thing. This is the core of Christianity. The phrase "girding the loins" implies readiness for duty. On that last night

in Egypt the children of Israel were commanded to stand with girded loins and sandalled feet, with staves in their hands, ready to be off on their exodus at a moment's notice. Paul at the start of his grand career inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" At the finish he exclaimed, "Now I am ready to be offered up!" We pastors soon discover who are the minute-men in our churches. Whether it be work or money or service of any kind that is required of them, their cheerful response proves that Christ has the first hold on their hearts. Eagerness for the fight marks the true soldier; eagerness for the run made the successful Olympic racer; eagerness to do Christ's will, or even to endure hard blows for his Master, marks the happy, ready-hearted Christian. The moment that a minister counts sermon-making a drudgery his girdle has broken.

2. Another idea suggested by the apostle's phrase is the compacting of all our powers upon the work we have in hand. Consecration is not enough without concentration. Paul's "this *one*

thing I do" tightened his resolves and kept him from frittering away life on trifles. Sir Isaac Newton's secret of success was "intending his mind upon the thing." Pericles only knew one street in Athens, the street that led from his own house to the Executive Chamber. At this season of the year the feeble sun-rays may be so focused by a burning-glass as to set wood on fire. I know some men and women of moderate abilities, who under the concentrating power of the love of Christ make wonderfully useful Christians. This compacting of one's self for the duty at hand is well described by the current phrase of a man's "pulling himself together." Some church members go to pieces for want of a stout girdle.

3. Loin-girding also implies a wholesome idea of *restraint*. Laxity is the curse of the times in doctrine, in preaching, in social life, and in church life. Loose thinking leads to loose living. The very word "religion" signifies something that holds us together and binds us to God. We cannot do just as we like. The people who

clamor for liberty to do as they please and who scout at Bible restraints as a yoke of bondage, are the very people who drift away into vagabondage. A robust Christian, like a robust soldier, understands the value of drill and discipline, and learns to obey the higher powers. It is not a good sign when a follower of Christ begins to loosen his girdle. He is preparing to shirk or skulk or go to sleep. Tighten the loins, brother, and make up your mind that a noble, victorious Christian life is not the easiest thing in this world.

Easy things, like cheap things, are of small value. The best attainments must be paid for. God has put some pretty steep hills on his road to heaven, and you will need to gird your loins if you expect to climb them. He provides the girdle; you have but to clasp it about you. He offers you a belt embroidered with these words: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Clap it on, and you will find that the things which seem impossible become possible to a resolute, unshrinking faith. Mr. Moody's negro woman

was about right when she said that if God ordered her to jump through a stone wall, the jumping was her part, and the getting through was his look-out and not hers. God promises that he will "gird us with strength," and that strength is always equal to the load to be carried or the cliff to be clambered.

It may be a timely text to preach about in this age of "liberal" thinking and mucilaginous theology. Some people are falling all apart and going to pieces from very looseness of principles. Weakness becomes wickedness. All backsliding in the church starts from loosening the hold on Christ. Conscience loosens its grip. The very garments which the Christian wears become entangled in all manner of worldly and sinful practices, until he can no longer make headway.

Wherefore, let us gird up the loins of our souls and "be sober." Life is not a frolic, and the service of our crucified Lord is not child's play. The end of all things is at hand with each of us. There is an exultant joy in the daring and the dash, the push and the climb, the

conflict and the victory, of a well-girded soul on his way to his crown. The prize is for the racer and none else. They who would fain go to heaven in what Rutherford calls a "close-covered chariot" may not gain admission at the gate; or if they do, they will be ashamed to look God's heroes there in the face. Let your loins be girded and your lamps be burning, and ye yourselves be like unto men who wait for their Lord. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them."

SHOW YOUR COLORS!

THE name of Capt. Hedley Vicars, the Christian hero of the Crimean war, is familiar to most of our readers. On the morning after his conversion he bought a large Bible and placed it open on the table of his room. He was determined that an open Bible for the future should be his "colors." "*It* was to speak for me," he said, "before I was strong enough to speak for myself." His military comrades came in and laughed at him, nicknamed him *the Methodist*, hinted to him that he had better not turn "hypocrite;" but in spite of a perpetual guerilla warfare of sneers and scoffs, he nobly stood by his colors. Having "clean hands, he waxed stronger and stronger." In time he became a spiritual power in his regiment, simply by a steadfast, bold, decided witnessing for Christ.

To his early disciples Jesus Christ said,

"Whosoever shall *confess* me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Confession is a broad, far-reaching word as the Saviour employed it. It refers first to the heart, then to the lips, then to the life. Whosoever would be saved must embrace Christ in the heart: this was conversion. Next, he must acknowledge him with the tongue: this was confession, or what we style a "profession of faith." Chiefest of all, he was to honor Christ by his daily living: and this was vital Christianity.

Jesus did not refer to the first point when he gave the command to confess him "*before men.*" He pre-supposed the secret interior work of conversion; he pre-supposed the root. What he demanded was the leafing out and the fruit-bearing of the tree. He demanded a bold, resolute, outspoken, love-inspired acknowledgment of him as their Saviour and their King from every man who expected to be acknowledged in turn before the Father and the holy angels. This confession was to be open, spontaneous, and sincere. Has

the reader of this paragraph never made such an acknowledgment of Christ? Then, my friend, you must not be astonished if Christ refuses to recognize you in the last decisive hour of judgment. It will then be too late to take the oath of loyalty. He who does not confess Christ in this world will be lost in the world to come.

In nearly every community there are a few halting, timid, irresolute persons who have a trembling faith in Christ, but who do not come out decidedly and confess him. They may be Christians, but the world is not allowed to know it. They carry dark lanterns. "Shining lights" they certainly are not. No one is the better for their secret, clandestine attempts to steal along quietly towards heaven without letting any one overhear their footsteps. Now this is a miserable—we were almost ready to say contemptible—mode of living, this concealment of the colors when danger threatens, this following along *after* the church with a vague hope of being counted in among God's people when heaven's prizes are distributed to the faithful.

We do not say that no one can be saved who does not openly join some Christian church; but we do say that the person who expects Christ to acknowledge him in heaven and yet refuses to acknowledge Christ "before men" is a self-convicted coward, and while disobeying his Master's orders has no right to expect his Master's blessing. After over forty years of pastoral observation we have come to the conclusion that every day spent by the genuine convert outside of the church of Christ is almost a day lost. He loses the sense of *responsibility* that he needs to feel; he loses the opportunity of doing good; he loses in self-respect, in the respect of others; he loses the approbation of Him who has so impressively said, "Whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed when I shall come in my own glory." When God *gives conversion* he *demands confession*. To be effective and useful this must be prompt, open, hearty, and decided.

But confession does not end with the public acknowledgment of Christ before the church. It

only begins there. This is one decisive step, to be followed by a thousand other steps in the same direction. We do know, however, of many church members whose single solitary act of loyalty to Christ was their standing up to respond to a church covenant before the pulpit; from that moment onward all that the church had of them was their idle names on the roll. Like too many of the boasted recruits in new regiments, they enlisted, drew their "bounty," and then "straightway are heard of no more." In the campaign for Christ and the truth they never answer to the roll-call of duty. It is very certain that their names will not be called when the victorious Immanuel announces the rewards to his faithful followers on "the sea of glass like unto pure gold."

We are all guilty of too much time-serving, too much concealment of truth, too much compromise with Christ's enemies. The boldest are not bold enough, and the cowards are as much despised by themselves as loathed by their Master in heaven. When will we learn that the

only course for a Christian is to "stand up for Jesus"? Men expect it of us; they despise us for our shamefacedness, and doubt the sincerity of our professions.

"Last night," said a Christian soldier to his chaplain, "in my barrack before going to bed I knelt down and prayed, when suddenly my comrades raised a loud laugh and began to throw boots and clothes at me." "Well," replied the chaplain, "suppose you defer your prayers till after you retire, and then *silently* lift up your heart to God."

Meeting him soon after, the chaplain said, "You took my advice, I suppose. How did it answer?" "Sir," replied the soldier, "I did take your advice for two or three evenings; but I began to think it looked like denying my Saviour; so I once more knelt down and prayed as at first." "What followed?" "Why, sir, not one of them laughs now. The *whole fifteen now kneel down* too, and I pray with them."

TRAINING CONVERTS.

A VERY large proportion of members in our churches count for very little except upon the muster-roll. When that roll is called for practical service they do not answer, "Here!" The lamentable statistics of contributions—for example, only eighty cents annually per member to the great work of Home Missions—show how small are the pecuniary gifts of those comatose Christians. The thin attendance at prayer-meetings in too many churches, the fewness of those who take part in them, or in any kind of personal effort for souls and the spread of Christ's kingdom, are illustrations of the same fact. A large portion of the power in the church is a latent power. The stream is diverted upon the water-wheels of the world, or else runs to waste, less than half of it turned upon spiritual machinery. One reason, among many, is that new converts

are not trained into Christian activity from the start.

Many converts to Christ are still in the morning of life, although they may have outgrown the Sunday-school. Under thirty years of age the habits of individuals are easily moulded; and during the thirty years after that they ought to be set to work for their Master. The true time to enlist a Christian in active service is when he enlists in the visible army of Christ by a public confession of Christ. If a new convert does not open his lips in some devotional meeting during the first thirty days, he is apt to remain tongue-tied for life. If he or she is not called into some sort of service, then doth he or she become a drone in the hive. One of the most effectual methods that I know of for training new converts is by the agency of a "Young People's Association," organized in the church and under the oversight of the pastor. There has been such an association in the church which I have the honor to serve for about twenty-two years. Sometimes its membership runs as high as seven hundred.

It embraces three classes of members—active, associate, and honorary. Any member of our church between the ages of fifteen and forty-five may be chosen an "active" member of the association. Any person of good moral character may become an associate member, entitled to all privileges except that of holding office. The fee of membership is fifty cents annually, and ten dollars secures a membership for life. The objects of the Association are to hold weekly devotional meetings, to promote social intercourse, to visit the sick, to search out and bring in young people, to labor for their conversion, and to do whatever will develop the spiritual life of new converts. There is a "Devotional Committee," which has charge of the Monday evening meeting, which is held in the houses of the congregation. This committee must select the house, have it announced from the pulpit, and see to it that the camp-stools and hymn-books are taken to the said house in season.

That meeting lasts just one hour. The leader of the service is allowed to occupy fifteen min-

utes in opening the exercises. As soon as possible after a person is converted he is requested to take charge of the meeting; this breaks him into the harness at once. No one is allowed to occupy more than three minutes in an address or a prayer. At the close of the service a half-hour is spent in giving introductions and in social intercourse. In pleasant weather we expect the house to be crowded; but we have seldom had the spiritual thermometer so high as to pack a house on a stormy evening. Only a pleasure-party or a political caucus can do that.

In these social meetings all are made welcome, and new converts are encouraged to take part. There is a freedom felt in a private house which cannot be felt by a beginner in the public lecture-room of the church. Most persons of modesty and common sense are apt to feel a certain diffidence in speaking or praying for the first time. Some of our most effective speakers made an unpromising start and had one or two break-downs before they could, as the oarsmen say, "pull themselves together." But it is not

simply a public speaking and praying service into which the Association trains its members. They are organized for various kinds of work. There is a Visiting Committee to look after the sick. There is an Entertainment Committee who arrange music, readings, and other pleasant features for a monthly sociable—to which the whole congregation are invited. The monthly entertainments commonly crowd the lecture-room or the Sabbath-school hall. There is a Temperance Committee which oversees that branch of Christian labor. Last evening a meeting of our young ladies who are interested in this blessed work was very largely attended. For years we had an efficient corps of tract-distributers in the Association; but the removal from town of its moving spirits has left this department rather feeble at present. There is also a "Relief Committee" for cases of poverty, and another one which provides flowers every Sabbath for the pulpit and then sends them to the rooms of the sick.

We have entered more into the details of this

Association because it has yielded such precious spiritual fruits. Its graduates are all over the West as active Christians; some of them have entered the gospel ministry. It has been a *training-school for converts*, and as such deserves a place beside the Sabbath-school in the affections and prayers of the church. I should almost as soon think of conducting a church without the regular officers as without this educational institution for new-born souls. It helps to solve several such questions as—how to develop the lay-element; how to cultivate social intercourse; how to save the young for Christ and keep them out of the clutch of the devil. In the apostolic churches the new material was put to immediate use. That was one reason why the word grew mightily and prevailed. If the machinery in those days was simpler than now, still there was organized effort, and that was built on *personal consecration to Christ.* Give us but that, and we shall have few drones in the hive. Conversion without consecration signifies birth without growth—blossoms without fruit.

We have drawn upon our personal observation in this outline of the work done by the Young People's Association of the Lafayette Avenue Church; but the same style of work is being done in many hundreds of churches by the admirable "Societies of Christian Endeavor." Every new convert should enroll himself or herself in such a society if it is within reach. Wherever the circumstances permit we also cordially commend the "Young Men's Christian Association" as a most excellent training-school in the service of Christ. There need be no clash or collision between the "Y. M. C. A." and the organization in each individual church.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

"ONE hundred able-bodied men wanted," was the announcement we lately saw at the head of an advertisement for recruits in the Government service. No invalids could pass muster. It was duty on deck and among the rigging that was required, and not a berth in the hospital. As we ministers are recruiting-officers for the King, it occurred to us that an announcement would not be out of place on the doors of the churches, "A hundred able-hearted and able-handed men and women wanted for duty." There are quite enough now who never answer to roll-call, or are stowed away in the berths of the sick and sleeping. The essentials demanded for good service are these four: the Christians needed by the King should be prayerful (i. e., full of praying without ceasing), patient, persevering, and powerful with the indwelling

Spirit. These four P's constitute the healthy Christian.

Such God *commands* every redeemed and renewed soul to be. His injunction is, "Be ye holy." Holiness signifies health of heart and daily life. It is equivalent to the Saxon word *wholth*, and therefore to be holy is to be healed from the deadly disease of sin and to be *whole* in the inner man. Regeneration is the recovery from the only disease which can cast both body and soul into hell. There are several characteristics of this healed or renewed state. One is a faith which can overcome the world and the powers of darkness. A second is a good conscience—a conscience illuminated by God's Word, kept sweet and wholesome by prayer, a conscience alert as the needle to the magnetic pole, and one that is a comfort to its owner, and not a tormentor. Just what a disordered liver is to the body is a bad conscience to the soul. One chief cause of the spiritual dyspepsia which makes so many professors of religion wretched and worthless is an ill-conditioned conscience.

A third evidence of soul-health is a strong appetite for the Word and for work. There is a hunger for the manna from heaven, and no lusting for the flesh-pots of the world. It is not the confectionery of fiction or the "mixed wine" of sensual amusements, or even the spiced stimulants of sensational sermons, that such a soul hungers for, but for the strong meat and the honeycomb of the inspired Word. An appetite for Bible-diet on the Sabbath and Bible-duties all through the week keeps a Christian athletic. He can mount up with an unclipped wing, as well as run with an unwearied foot. You never find such Christians hobbling on crutches or with limbs bandaged from a bad fall.

Since spiritual sickness is the fruit of sin, and spiritual health is both possible and obligatory upon every Christian, how shall the invalids be recovered? "I will restore health unto thee, saith the Lord." God works cures not by miracles, but by means and by medicines. One of these is the purgative of *truth* faithfully administered. Finney understood how

to apply this heroic treatment; but with some pulpit-practitioners we fear that it is a lost art. Ministers ought to read his "Lectures on Revivals" at least once every year. Our Heavenly Father in his restoring processes often employs the sharp surgery of *trials*, and He always knows where to apply the lancet. Many a chastised Christian, as the bad blood was drawn from him, has cried out, "Thy hand presseth me sore!" and the answer has been, "I wound that I may make whole; I can restore unto thee the joys of salvation."

Christ Jesus is the great health-giver and health-preserver. Do we often enough take in the full scope of that wonderful expression, "the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with *healing* in his wings"? There is hygienic power in physical sunshine; it brings not only light and heat, but health. It would bring quick recovery for many an enfeebled and diseased soul to come back into the light of Christ's countenance. A great deal of spiritual sickness springs from bad atmosphere; and the heavenly winds of the

divine Spirit alone can sweep away this malaria. With the powerful breath of the Holy Spirit comes a new and purified and bracing atmosphere. We remember addressing a crowded audience once in a country schoolhouse on a winter night, and the air became so foul that the candles went almost out. "Please to open that door."

The moment that the opened door let in the oxygen of the wintry air, every candle flamed up immediately. Perhaps one reason why the lights are so deplorably low, and almost gone out, in too many churches, is that the atmosphere has become heavy with worldliness and unbelief and indifference to the salvation of sinners. Oh, what a glorious oxygen would pour into our churches and prayer-meetings and hearts if the Holy Spirit should come like a mighty rushing wind, purifying, arousing, and quickening unto the very life of God in the soul! This would be a *revival*, a living again, a reconversion from dead and decaying works into the muscle and the glow of a vigorous health.

Such recovery is not to be reached by a wholesale process; it must be the individual repentance and restoration of each invalid for himself or herself. God says to each one, "Return unto me, and I will heal thy backslidings." The lepers that came to Christ were not afraid to show their loathsome diseases right before the very face of the compassionate Son of God. We must not be gingerly in our confessions, or seek to cover our sins with bandages or pull a plaster of apology over the leprous spots. "Wash me *thoroughly* from my iniquities" is the true prayer of penitence. This means (as Maclaren has well put it), "Wash me, beat me, tread me down, hammer me with mallets, rub me with caustic nitre; do anything, anything with me, if only those foul spots melt away from the texture of my soul."

Such penitence, such prayer, brings pardon. Not only pardon for the past, but purity and peace with God, and *power*. Then the penitent soul can cry, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation," and the joys will pour in like fresh,

full streams after a drought. A church thus purified and empowered from heaven will teach transgressors God's ways, and once more sinners will be converted unto Him. Brethren, this is the *revival* we need; this we can have if we take God's plan to secure it. He is the almighty and the all-loving Healer. Hope ye in God; and we may yet praise Him who is the health of our countenance and our God.

SOUL-FOOD.

EVERY living organism feeds on something outside of itself. Even the trees would wither and die if they could not draw sustenance out of the air and sap out of the earth. The human soul is a feeding creature. "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." A still more remarkable expression occurs in the fifteenth chapter of Jeremiah: "Thy words were found, and I *did eat them*." We often employ the same figure of speech. A ship-master, hungry for tidings from home, lands at a port where he finds a letter from his wife. It is only so much paper and ink, but by a sort of magical process it not only talks to him, but transports the whole home-circle before his longing eyes, and he is ready to say to his far-away wife, "Thy letter was found, and I devoured it."

So does the hungry heart of a Christian devour the words of Him who is the Bread of Life. When first awakened to a sense of sin, his mind opened its mouth and swallowed eagerly the invitation, Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. The truth thus taken and digested became a part of the fibre of the new man in Christ Jesus. One reason why multitudes remain impenitent and without any hope for eternity is that they revolt at unpalatable truths. When their utter depravity is set before them, and their condemnation already before a holy God and the reality of a "wrath to come," they revolt, and say, "I cannot swallow that." They must take God's bread or starve, for he will not change it to suit their sinful tastes; they must swallow pungent truths or die, for God will not sweeten a bitter medicine to please a sinful palate. We ministers or Sabbath-school teachers commit a fatal mistake when we dilute or adulterate any bitter doses which God puts into our hands as spiritual physicians. When the faithful, searching, purging truths have been swallowed and have done their

blessed work, the healed heart has been ready to exclaim, "I found Thy words, and did eat them, and they have been to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart!"

What delicious feeding there is on the Promises! The soul delights itself with them as with marrow and fatness. There is no end to the honey-comb that distils from the fourteenth chapter of John. We can feed more than five thousand, besides the women and children, with the single big loaf—"This is the promise which He hath promised us, even eternal life." There was a great weight of Christian experience in the homely vernacular of Uncle Johnson, the veteran negro, when he said to his pastor, "I 's tinking dat if de crumbs of joy dat fall from de Massa's table in dis world am so good, what will de great loaf in glory be? I wants to get hold ob de full dish. O massa, ef you gets home afore I do, tell 'em to keep de table standin', for old Johnson is on his way and is bound to be dere."

There is a sufficient reason why so many members of our churches are so pitiably weak,

either to work or to resist temptation. Starvation has reduced them to living skeletons. A Christian soul cannot keep fat and strong on daily newspapers or on the best of secular literature. Such self-weakening is wickedness. Food is fuel to the body, repairing what is burnt away by various vital processes. How can a soul be either fed or warmed that seldom touches the Bread of Life? All the most growing Christians are large feeders on the Word of God.

The breakfast which I ate this morning is driving my pen now over this sheet of paper; the same meal sent hundreds of my flock across the ferry, and is moving hands and feet and brains for the whole day. The food put in comes out in physical activities. In like manner a nutritious sermon may be roast beef to a toiling and tempted soul for the whole week; in the strength of that strong meat he goes many days. God only knows how many slips, how many weak acts and utterances, and how many falls, have overtaken professed Christians during the week simply because they neglected to eat their spirit-

nal rations on the previous Sabbath. They lost the very truths and the conscience-strength they needed; their sin found them out.

The words of Jesus, his whole code of duty, if eaten and digested and assimilated, come out in the daily conduct. Every act of unselfish service to others, every triumph over temptation, every word spoken for the Master, every submissive endurance of heavy trial, every push upward towards a higher degree of holiness, is the outcome of Christ's commandments and promises, wrought into the fibre of the daily life. Paul realized the vital importance of this soul-food when he exhorted his brethren to "let the words of Christ dwell in you (i. e., stay in you as a strengthener) abundantly." God's people cannot live on husks. An ill-fed army must either flee or surrender. Blessed be the hunger that sends our souls to Christ!

WHERE IS YOUR PLACE?

A PLACE for every man, and every man in his place! This motto is as good for Christ's church as it was for the army during the war. But what is every Christian's right place?

We answer that it is the one for which God made him and for which the Holy Spirit converted him. To mistake it is a sad blunder; to desert it is a disgrace. The Bible acknowledges that God made his servants for some special "niche," for it says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." The principle here laid down is that every man or woman who loves Jesus should select and should fill that post of

duty for which his or her gifts have fitted them. But "let no man neglect the gift that is in him."

Some men—like Spurgeon and Newman Hall and Bishop Simpson—were created for the pulpit. God gave them clear heads, warm hearts, strong lungs and eloquent tongues, and a hunger for saving souls. To possess such gifts is a clear call to the ministry. And thousands of humbler preachers who cannot attract Spurgeon's crowds are yet as clearly called to the ministry of the Word as the London Boanerges was himself. But the vainglorious creature who cannot attract an audience except by sensational "clap-trap" or by Barnumish advertisements was certainly never called of God to the sacred ministry. He may draw auditors, but he commonly draws them away from places where they would be more profited.

Suppose a man feels convinced, after deep prayer and self-examination, that God has not called him to the pulpit; what then? Must he be silent? Are all the speaking gifts of the

pious lawyer or doctor or merchant or mechanic to run to waste? No, verily! Let such proclaim the glad tidings of Christ and the story of their own Christian experience in the prayer-meeting or the mission-school or the cottage conference-meeting, or wherever they can find souls to plead with. How successful this lay-labor may be made, let such men as Harlan Page and Richard Weaver and George H. Stuart and D. L. Moody and John Wanamaker bear witness. Let the powerful lay-preaching heard every day in "Fulton Street" answer. Some of the best discourses I have ever heard were but five or ten minutes long and were delivered in my own prayer-meeting. Christian lawyers ought to do more of this tongue-work. As a class they are too silent in our meetings and Sunday-schools. God is opening a wide field for laymen to act on "picket-duty" and as skirmishers and sharp-shooters in the spiritual warfare.

What our churches most need (next to the baptism of the Holy Ghost) is the development of all the members. So much is thrown upon

the ministry that some of us can hardly catch a spare hour for our own family and fireside. A city pastor is often expected to prepare three sermons or lectures, to visit the flock, to see the sick, to bury the dead, and to act on a dozen committees and to make two or three speeches, all in a single week! The church becomes Dr. T——'s church or Mr. B——'s church or Dr. C——'s church, or some other man's church, instead of being the people's church, with some gifted man as its overseer and pastor.

Now I love to work exceedingly, but not one whit more than I love to see my congregation work. And no man in my flock has any more right to turn his spiritual work over upon me than he has a right to send me to market for him or to cook or eat his dinner for him. He needs his work as much as I need mine. In revival times the whole church is alive and busy. But where and when did the Master ever give a "furlough" to three-fourths of our people to quit the ranks just as soon as a revival campaign is over?

A Christian who is keen for work will soon find his place. If he is "apt to teach," he or she will soon gather the Sabbath-school class, and will be there, Bible in hand, every Sunday, even though the rain is pattering on the pavements. Commend me to the teacher who wears a "waterproof" and always consults conscience sooner than the barometer.

Whoever has the gift of song should join God's great choir and sing at every religious service. The owner of a good voice must give account for that voice at the day of judgment. We never shall have genuine congregational singing until every redeemed child of Christ sings from duty and consecrates the gift of music to the Lord. Those who expect to sing in heaven had better practise here.

Tract distribution is going too much out of fashion. It is a blessed and heaven-honored agency for doing good. Every one who has some spare time and a tongue and a little pious tact can go out with a bundle of tracts to the abodes of ignorance and irreligion.

Those who cannot exhort or teach in a Sunday-school or distribute tracts, can at least live for Jesus at home and come and join in the prayers of the prayer-meeting. The oldest, the timidest, the least gifted, can do surely as much as this. Every one too can give something when the contribution-box is passed. The gift of a "cup of cold water" in Christ's name has its reward. Every one whom Jesus saves has a place assigned to him in the vineyard. An idle Christian is a monster!

Friend, have *you* found your place?

CONSCIENCE IN RELIGION.

MEN of the world are ready to admit the genuineness of the piety which speaks the truth and pays its honest debts. But when a man is fervid in the prayer-meeting and frigidly selfish outside of the meeting—when he can sing a psalm or swindle a neighbor in a bargain with the same smooth tongue—he must expect to be held "at a discount." This is but right. The world is warranted in looking for a high standard of character and conduct from those who profess to follow the pure and holy Jesus. Christians must not find fault with the unconverted who find fault with them for any inconsistencies of conduct. It is a tribute of solid respect for Christianity that is paid to it by those who expect its professors to be upright and conscientious. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said the Master. Jesus expects and demands

that his followers shall live up to the clear bright standard of his Word.

To do this the conscience must be well educated and thoroughly obeyed. A conscience is to its owner what a compass is to an ocean steamer. Some Christians' moral compasses are so constantly deflected by the presence of disturbing elements in the heart that they "steer wild," and often run on rocks. A conscience that does not point squarely and unvaryingly towards the pole-star of God's truth is a dangerous one to steer the life by. Bible-study is necessary to keep our consciences well adjusted. A careful man often sets his watch by the sun. A careful Christian will be constantly setting his conscience by the Bible. Then he can go by it without any fear of going astray. Paul makes much, but not too much, of having "a good conscience." The characteristics of a good conscience are quick discernment of sin even when it wears a white raiment, and a loud voice to warn its possessor when sin is getting too near. The office of the conscience is to detect sin and

to sound the alarm-bell; then it becomes the duty of the will to seize the helm and steer clear of the danger.

What a beautifully-adjusted conscience Joseph had! Behind the captivating smile of his wanton temptress he detects a lurking devil. There is no spectator present except One. God is in that chamber. Joseph's first question is not, "How shall I do this wrong to Potiphar?" but, "How shall I do this great wickedness and *sin against God?*" If he had stopped to calculate the chances of Potiphar's ever finding him out, he would have probably wrecked himself on the spot. He would have taken hell-fire into his bosom, as every young man or woman does who commits this deadly sin. The first trait of a good conscience is that it keeps God ever before the eye.

But of what value is the best instructed conscience if it is not *obeyed?* It was Joseph's one decisive act of obedience to conscience which, in the end, seated him on the Prime Minister's throne in Egypt. It was King Saul's constant

throttling of his own conscience that made him the gloomy wretch that he was. Paul and Silas made the old Bastile of Philippi ring with their joyful hymns at midnight, because their spirits were in sweet harmony with God. On the other hand, it was Judas Iscariot's constant fight against conscience which made his career so wretched; and conscience got her revenge when she twisted a suicide's rope around his worthless neck.

If the secret could be known, this is the reason why many Christian professors have such a sorry time of it and know nothing of joyous sunshine in their religion. They are at war with their own consciences. They slip into this sin and into that, resolving every time, "This shall be the last." But it is not the last. Every violence done to their own moral sense makes them the weaker and the more wretched. Jesus hides his face from them. They take but little comfort in any religious duty, and even come to the communion table with the guilty feeling that they are "dipping the hand into the dish" only

to betray their Lord. Unless we are very much mistaken, the real reason for so much unhappiness in the tempers and the lives of many church members is that their consciences are ill at ease. Instead of being a trusted guide and comforter, conscience becomes a constant tormentor. Such a wounded spirit who can bear?

We throw out these few hints with a hope that they may discover to certain unhappy and unhealthy professors the real reason for their dark and dreary condition. No man can be happy unless he sets his conscience "in time" with the teachings of Christ and then goes by it. He will then find himself in the right frame for prayer. He will enjoy his own meditations and his communion with his Master. He will be a living witness for Christ, never a stumbling-block for others. His life, instead of being a jangling discord of inconsistencies, will be a beautiful harmony, both with the inner voice of a pure conscience and with the heavenly voice of his beloved Lord.

THE MIGHTY WORD "NO."

As we walk through history with a Diogenes' lantern in our hand it is always pleasant to come upon an honest and a noble man. Such a one was Nehemiah, the rebuilder and reformer of Jerusalem. He stands in the Scripture gallery of characters as John Hampden's statue stands in the line of illustrious worthies which flanks the entrance to the British Parliament.

Nehemiah was a man who understood the power of that prodigious word "*No.*" When he left the Persian capital at Shushan, he went down to Jerusalem determined to do something to relieve his suffering people there. The dear old city was in ruins. The Jews who had returned thither from Babylon were oppressed and plundered. The same kind of abuses had crept in which have disgraced some of our city governments. Nehemiah lays hold of practical re-

forms with an unsparing hand. First he rouses the people with a trumpet-peal to "rise up and build" the ruined walls. Then he abolishes the oppressive taxation and the desecrations of the Sabbath and the temple. His predecessors in office had been receiving big salaries and had allowed their underlings to fleece the people. Nehemiah might have cited their example as a precedent and followed in their wake—after the manner in which greedy office-holders or plunderers thrust their arms into public treasuries in our day. But his simple, manly statement is, "*So did not I*, because of the fear of God." Nobly said! We wish every young man would write those sharp, ringing words in his note-book and determine to make the same answer whenever he is tempted to do a selfish or a wicked act.

The most tremendous word in the English language is the short yet mighty word NO. It has been the pivot on which innumerable destinies have turned for this world and the next. Spoken at the right moment, it has saved multitudes from disgrace, from ruin—yes, from an

endless hell! The splendid career of Joseph turned on the prompt "No" spoken at the very nick of time. Had he stopped to parley with that wanton woman (as too many young men stop to talk with a bright-eyed temptress in the street), he would have been lost. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" saved him from the dizzy edge of the precipice. Daniel might easily have said to himself, "Oh! everybody about the court here drinks wine and lives high on the king's meat. I do not want to be thought queer or puritanical." He dared to be singular. At the end of two weeks he had a cleaner countenance and a sweeter breath than any of the fast livers in the palace. "So did not I" was the motto of this sturdy young tee-totaler. If he had yielded to the current of temptation and drifted with it, we never should have heard of such a man as Daniel.

All the people who make a marked success in life and who achieve any good work for God are the people who are not ashamed to be thought singular. The man who runs with the crowd

counts for nothing. It is when he turns about and faces the multitude who are rushing on to do the evil that he commands every eye. Then by a bold protest he may "put a thousand to flight." So the young monk, Luther, turned about and faced the hosts of the Papacy. His heroic "No," nailed up on the church-door of Wittenberg, aroused Europe from its delusive and deadly dreams. Standing alone, he was reinforced by the Almighty.

But it is not only the Luthers, the Wilberforces, the John Quincy Adams and the Sumners, who make their mark by being singular. Every young man and woman, in their humbler spheres, must come out and be separate from the company of sinners if they wish to save their characters and their souls. The downward pull of sin is tremendous. To be able firmly to say, "Yet will not I," requires the grace from above in the heart. There is a subtle pull also in the drift of simple fashion and usage which carries away every one who is not well established on a Bible conscience. Three-fourths of all the per-

sons who are drowned on the seashore are swept out by the undertow. This is the secret influence which takes hold of so many church members and carries them off into extravagant living, into sinful amusements and all manner of worldly conformities. Every true Christian is bound to be a "nonconformist." If he is not well anchored for Christ he is swept away by the undertow. The bottom of the great deep is strewed with such backsliders.

I would press this truth home upon every young man who reads this page: your salvation depends on your ability to say "No." When your principle is put to the test, ask God's help and stand firm. The messmates of Capt. Hedley Vicars sneered at him as a "Methodist" and a fanatic. He put his Bible on the table in his tent and then stood by his colors. A British soldier once told me that Vicars was a spiritual power in his regiment. We had just such Christian heroes in our army during the war.

In every school the difference is clearly marked between the boy who has moral pluck

and the boy who is mere pulp. The one knows how to say "No." The other is so afraid of being thought "verdant" that he soon kills everything pure and fresh and manly in his character and dries up into a premature hardness of heart. Five lads were once gathered into a room at boarding-school, and four of them engaged in a game of cards, which was expressly forbidden by the rules. One of the players was called out. The three said to the quiet lad who was busy at something else, "Come, take a hand with us. It is too bad to have the game broken up. We will show you how to play. Come along." Now that was a turning-point in that lad's life. He nobly said, "My father does not wish me to play cards, and I will not disobey him." That sentence settled the matter and settled his position among his associates. He was the boy who could say "No;" and thenceforward his victories were made easy and sure. I well remember the pressure brought to bear in college upon every young man to join in a wine-drink or to take a hand in some contraband

amusement. Some timber got well seasoned. Some of the other sort got well rotted through sensuality and vice. The Nehemiahs at college have been Nehemiahs ever since. The boy was father of the man.

The only motive that could hold back the brave "nonconformist" at Jerusalem was a godly conscience. "So did not I, *because of the fear of God.*" This ever-present principle held him firm when temptation struck him as the undercurrents strike against the keel. What the fear of God did for Nehemiah, faith in the Lord Jesus will do for you. Christ must be to you a pattern, and he must be to you a power. It is not enough to believe on Jesus. You must "add to your faith *courage*" (for that is the real meaning of the word translated "virtue" in our English Bibles). Then, with Christ as your model and Christ as your inward might, you will always be able to face down temptation with the iron answer, "So will not I."

WATCH!

SOME bells require to be rung very often. As there is constant danger from certain quarters, so there must be constant warnings. When our Lord repeats an admonition five times over within the space of a dozen lines, we may be quite sure that he regarded it as one of supreme importance. If we turn to the thirteenth chapter of St. Mark we discover that he repeated his injunction to watchfulness several times, and then closed his solemn discourse with the sharp stroke on the alarm-bell, "I say unto you all, *watch!*"

Those of us who have crossed the ocean in a steamship have always gone down to our berths on a dark night with a more comfortable sense of security from having seen a "lookout" posted on the ship's bow. It is the business of that sailor to do two things, viz., to keep wide awake

and to report instantly any glimpse of a vessel or an iceberg before the steamer's path. His signal is the security of every soul on board. Conscience is the lookout on the bow in the voyage of life. Some people with sinful infatuation put conscience at the stern; it may utter its shriek of remorse when the sin has been committed and the craft has struck the temptation which stove in the bow. But a conscience that can do no more than moan and weep over sins already committed is of little worth; for even that process is a very hardening one if continued very long.

I have observed one very undeniable fact in my own experience and in my observation of others: this fact is that everything depends on the manner in which first sins and first slips from the right path are treated. If a first false step is promptly met by a thorough repentance (as in the case of Peter's lie in Pilate's Hall), then the mischief ends. The soul soon recovers its healthy tone, and is sometimes the wiser and stronger for its sad experience. But if the first sin is followed by a second and a third and a

fourth without any contrition before God, then conscience soon becomes benumbed and powerless. In time it is seared as with a hot iron. This is the case with those professed Christians who lapse into sensual vices or who are detected in dishonest defalcations or breaches of trust. All these men could have been easily saved right after the first transgression; but when that was passed without compunction, the rapids soon whirled them over the cataract. It is astonishing to observe how fast sin will anodyne even a Christian's conscience.

1. It is the office of a healthy conscience not only to feel keen compunctions when wrong has been done, but to detect sin in advance and to sound the alarm to the will, which has its hand on the helm. The truly righteous man has just as many temptations floating across his weather-bow as the ungodly or the backslider has. The difference is that the good man's conscience detects the danger and gives the signal to the will to "steer clear" of the enemy. Nay, more; such a conscience reports the danger to God in

prayer, and prompt help comes from heaven to the hand on the helm. Wherefore the Master commands us to both "watch and pray."

2. The eye must be open towards more directions than one. While a sentinel is steadily looking in the quarter whence he expects the enemy, he may be surprised by a hand laid on his shoulder from behind, and as he turns around he finds the foe already inside the ramparts! He was watching, but in the wrong direction. The devil is a master of strategy. He always finds out what gate is unguarded. We are often shocked at the fall of certain much-trusted persons into heinous sin; but not more than the persons are themselves when they get their eyes open to see "whence they have fallen." The fatal mistake of all such is that they did not keep the eyes open when the first temptation came.

3. It is always unwise to despise an enemy. We never know how many guns he carries until he has stolen a march on us and opens fire. King Edward's garrison fell asleep in Edin-

burgh Castle because they fancied it impregnable, and despised the little band of Scottish soldiers who were prowling about below the cliff. But when Randolph's thirty men had scaled the precipice and leaped the walls, they were an overmatch for a whole garrison who were asleep. The simple reason why the Englishmen did not watch that night was that they did not regard a score or two of Highlanders worth the watching. You and I, dear reader, have sometimes caught our hardest blows from the foes whom we underrated. Our Lord himself did not underrate the adversary on the mount of temptation.

4. The best preventive against spiritual assault and overthrow is to keep up constantly the tone and fibre of a truly godly character by perpetual living close with God. Multitudes live as if there were no God in the broad world. They act as if the Master were away and would never return. "Blessed is that servant whom, when the Master cometh, he finds watching." It is not only the enemy whom we are to be looking after, but our Lord himself. I never

know *when* he will come to inspect my poor work, or when he will come with the orders to drop the tools into the grave. But a perpetually vigilant life of communion and Word-study and holy intercourse with him will keep us ever ready for "the last call." If we watch thus for him he will be ever watching *over us*, and then no deadly danger shall ever befall us. It ought to be not only a duty but a delight to be watchful. For there are so many mercies constantly coming in sight, so many opportunities to do good, so many beautiful views of God's providence, and so many foretastes of heaven, that we lose more than we can afford to if we fall asleep on our homeward way. Can we "not watch with him *one hour*"? It will soon be over.

THE THOUGHT-MILL.

EVERY one of us carries in his or her person a more marvellous apparatus than human skill ever conceived. It may be likened to a *mill* which is running without any pause, unless it be during the unconscious hours of sleep. The Creator who fashioned this wonderful mill has provided the wheat and corn, which, if well ground, furnish food to nourish and strengthen and make us happy. But the evil one is ever on the watch to throw in worthless chaff or poisonous tares, which if ground out and consumed are fatal to health, and may breed disease and death. This marvellous mill is the *mind*—fearfully and wonderfully made. Fill it with the golden wheat of pure and noble thoughts, and the outcome of it will be a life worth carrying up to the judgment-seat. If selfishness and Satan supply the grist, then the outcome will be mis-

chief, misery, and perdition. Keep thy heart-mill with all diligence and watchfulness; for out of it are the issues of thy life. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

A person is known by the company he keeps. So the thoughts which we harbor within us, and which go out through the door of our senses, decide our characters. Let me but know what thoughts occupy most your mind *when you are alone*, and I will determine what manner of person you are. A true child of God gives house-room to pure, quickening, and holy thoughts; and he is constantly striving to bar up door and windows against wicked intruders. He watches his heart-mill lest the tempter fill it with nettles or clog it with gravel.

Habitual thinking determines whether we are Christ's servants or Satan's bond-slaves. A sensualist is only a filthy thinker. The walls of his mind are hung around with lascivious pictures; his very soul becomes a brothel, and it is no easy task after conversion to clean this house of unclean imagery. Do a man's thoughts run every

day upon the bottle? Then he is a tippler or a sot. A miser's mind is simply a money-bag. Does another man's mind-mill welcome every golden thought from God's Word, from nature, and from the workings of the Holy Spirit? Then as the sweet, nutritious flour pours from between the rollers of a Minnesota grain-mill, so do inspiring words and useful plans and godly deeds stream out from that Christian's consecrated heart.

One of the highest of spiritual luxuries is the companionship of pure, exhilarating, and holy thoughts. "I thought of Jesus," said devout Samuel Rutherford, "until every stone in the walls of my prison cell shone like a ruby." We can imagine how the white doves fluttered in and lighted on John Bunyan's rude table in his little Bedford gaol. No king entertained such royal guests as the poor tinker, when he set open his soul's windows towards heaven.

On the other hand, there is no greater torment than to be an unclean or intensely selfish or profane thinker. Such a man is "grievously

vexed with a devil." Out of such hearts proceed evil thoughts, revenges, cruelties, fornications, pride, and blasphemies. What a hell in advance to have such a heart! To carry such a heart into eternity, and to be locked up with it there, would be the worm that dieth not and the fire that is never quenched.

Do you say that you are troubled with impure and defiling thoughts? Then *don't think them.* Are you haunted with doubting and distrusting and skeptical thoughts against God and his promises? *Don't think them.* Watch the mill and fling them out. All thoughts have their germs. The surest way to kill a sin is to kill it in the egg. At the very moment when a wicked thought is conceived, or is thrust into your mind, *crush it!* The little serpent will soon become the anaconda which will enfold you and strangle you like the fabled Laocoön in the embrace of the sea-monsters.

How important, too, is it to nurse into vigorous life every germ of pure and heaven-inspired thought! Your whole spiritual life will depend

upon the reception and the treatment you give to every good idea born in your soul or awakened there by the divine Spirit. To smother a good thought is often a quenching of the Holy Spirit; it has cost the eternal ruin of millions; it may rob you of a heavenly hope.

A wonderful apparatus indeed is this thought-mill within our breasts. We cannot guard it too carefully. Christ offers us his precious truth to supply it, his help to keep it clear from the wretched garbage which the evil one would fling into it, and his propelling power to drive it with all useful and holy activities. The hand of Death cannot destroy this marvellous piece of God's workmanship; for it is immortal. Keep this ever-busy, ever-tempted, ever-active heart of thine with ceaseless care and with prayer; and in heaven you will find that the *pure in heart shall see God.*

THE SAFEGUARD OF TOTAL ABSTINENCE.

A YOUNG man who had just lost an excellent situation by a two days' "spree" came into my study lately and said to me, "Doctor, I cannot understand how it is that I should have made such a fool of myself and thrown away my chance for a living. This is almost killing my little wife." I replied to him, "There is no mystery about your case. You have been tampering with drink a long while, trying to jump half way down Niagara. You ought to have stopped before you began. It would not have cost you one-hundredth part as much effort to have signed a total abstinence pledge several years ago as it will now to break loose from this terrible habit." I entreated my friend to grapple his weakness to God's strength. He signed a pledge of entire abstinence, and went away

with the desperate look of a man who is pulling for life in the rapids in full sight of the cataract.

That young man is a fair representative of a sadly numerous class who "lock the stable-door after the horse is stolen." He may possibly be saved, but so as by fire. My plain talk to-day is with those who have not yet flung themselves into the rapids. I wish to give half a dozen common-sense reasons for letting every intoxicating drink (whatever its name) entirely alone. He who never touches a drop will assuredly never become a drunkard. Prevention is easy, is safe, is sure; reformation is difficult, and with some persons is well nigh impossible. The Jews were commanded to build battlements around the flat roofs of their dwellings in order to prevent the children from falling over into the street. To put up the parapet cost but little, but the want of it might cost broken bones; and alas! what human power could recall a dead darling to life? I am always thankful that I took a pledge of entire abstinence in early boyhood. But for that battlement I might have been ruined

by the drinking usages which were deplorably prevalent in my college. "Stick to the teetotal," said a shrewd old kinsman to me when I started for college; and now, after forty years, I wish to commend the bridge that carried me safely over.

1. The first argument, my friend, for total abstinence is that no healthy person *needs* an alcoholic beverage; and even invalids had better be careful how they tamper with it as a medicine. Sir Henry Thompson and several other distinguished British physicians have deliberately declared that "alcoholic beverages cannot in any sense be considered necessary for the maintenance of healthy life, that it is not a food in any true sense of that term, and that the steadiest and best work is best done without it." Livingstone, the heroic explorer of Central Africa, was both a physician and a teetotaler. His testimony was, "I find that I can stand every hardship best by using water, and water only." I entreat you not to fall into the delusion that you can do any honest work the better by firing

up your nerves with alcohol. If you do, you will have to increase the fuel constantly in order to produce the effect. Solid food and sound sleep are all you require. Even as a tonic medicine wine and bourbon may cover up a great deal; they *cure but very little.* Several friends I have known to be decoyed by them into drunkenness and disgrace.

2. Therein lies a second reason for avoiding all intoxicants. They are deceitful. Not only the sting of the serpent, but the subtlety of the serpent, is in them. The deception lies in the fact that the *habit* of drinking will become confirmed before you suspect it. That young man who came into my study so tortured with the adder's bite never dreamed at the outset that he was playing with a rattlesnake. Every alcoholic drink has in it this quality, that it never satisfies, but awakens a constant demand for more. A small glass creates a thirst for a larger; one draught only whets the appetite for a second. This is not the case with any wholesome food or beverage. Bread and beef do not breed excess;

one glass of milk does not arouse a morbid thirst for two the next time. But this horse-leech quality in alcoholic liquors, which cries, "Give, give," and is never satisfied, is the very thing that makes them so dangerous. That it is which makes it so difficult to drink wine or brandy moderately, and so easy to fall into drunkenness. A healthful beverage satisfies appetite; a hurtful one, like wine or brandy, stimulates appetite until it becomes an uncontrollable frenzy. This I regard as the Creator's *law against alcohol;* and when you take your first social glass you begin to play with a deadly serpent.

You may say, "Every one who drinks liquors does not become a sot." Very true, but every sot drinks liquors; and not one in a million ever expected to become a sot when he began with his champagne or his "sherry cobbler." Will you run the risk? I would not. The most deplorable wrecks are those of men or women who at the outset considered themselves perfectly strong and invulnerable. Nothing from the pen of Dickens can surpass a heart-rending letter

which I received from a cultured gentleman (then in an almshouse), who declared that he traced all the misery of his life directly to the "first glass he ever drank at the N—— House, in the capital of Ohio." First glasses have peopled hell! With whatever "odds" in your favor, will you run the fearful hazard? Then stop before you begin.

3. A third reason why alcoholic drinks are dangerous is that it is the peculiar property of alcohol to strike directly to the *brain*. Some drugs have an affinity for the heart, others for the spine. The glass of brandy aims for the brain as a hound makes for a hare. In striking the brain it overturns the throne of the reason and makes a man a maniac. Like the shot in a naval battle which hits "between wind and water," the alcoholic death-shot strikes where body and mind meet, and sends both to the bottom. No brain is proof against it.

The mightiest man intellectually whom I ever saw in America, I once saw pitiably drunk! Alcohol is no respecter of persons; the giant and

the idiot are struck down alike by its stiletto. You might as well put the pistol to your brain and make swift, sure work with it as to poison your brain by the slower and equally deadly process of the bottle. Ninety-nine hundredths of all the suicides in the land began with a thoughtless glass. Stop, my friend, before you begin!

4. All intoxicating drinks are more dangerous in this country than in almost any other, from the nervous temperament of our people. Our climate is stimulating, and American life, in almost every direction, runs at a high rate of speed. Youth is commonly stronger at the engine than it is at the brakes. This is preëminently true of our young men. One unanswerable proof of the difficulty of stopping the drink-habit is found in the fact that so very few are actually reformed. Not one-tenth of those who enslave themselves to the bottle ever break loose, even though they cry out in their sober moments, "Would to God that I might never taste another drop!" There was a touching pathos in the speech of one of "our boys in blue" to the

police magistrate after he was arrested for drunkenness. He held up a whiskey flask and said, "Your honor, the only enemy that ever conquered me is *that!*" Yet he admitted that enemy himself and could not dislodge it.

I might multiply arguments in favor of total abstinence as the only certain safeguard. The grace of God is powerless if you voluntarily yield to temptation. It is a defiance to the Almighty for you to leap into the rapids and expect him to save you from the cataract. The remainder of my life shall be spent in endeavoring to prevent young men from embarking on the stream which is all music and mirth at the starting-point, and all death and damnation at the bottom. Tons of arguments and appeals have been printed on this vital question, "How to save young men from strong drink," but they may all be condensed into one line—*Stop before you begin!*

THE PERILS OF THE PLAYHOUSE.

YOUNG people often ask me the questions, "Would it be right for me to go to the theatre? If not, then why not?"

Those who propound these questions are not of the dissipated and dissolute class, but clean young men and maidens — too clean to be smirched by needless exposure to impure influences. That such questions are constantly raised is not surprising, for the playhouse is increasingly persistent in its demands on popular attention and patronage. It fills a constantly enlarging place in the daily journals. Theatres multiply more rapidly than churches in some of our great cities. Theatre-going increases more than church-going. The dead walls are covered with pictorial representations of scenes and actors in full dress (or in very little dress), and many of these are of such disgusting indecency that they

deserve suppression by the public authorities. If the pictures be so shameless, what must the originals be? Before our youthful inquirers become patrons of the playhouse it is but fair that they should know just what perils to their moral nature and their welfare as immortal beings they are likely to encounter.

First. The first peril is to purity of character. Your eyes and ears are windows and doors to the heart. What enters once never goes out. Photographs taken on the memory are not easily effaced or burned up; they stick there, and often become tempters and tormentors for a lifetime. "I'd give my right hand," said a Christian to me once, "if I could rub out the abominable things that I put into my mind when I was a fast young man." He could not do it; neither will you be able to efface the lascivious images or the impure words which the stage may photograph on your very soul. We do not affirm that every popular play is immoral, or that every performer is impure, or that every play-goer is on the scent for sensual excitements; but the stage

is to be estimated as a totality, and the whole trend of the average American stage is hostile to heart-purity. The exceptions do not alter the rule. Nor have honest attempts to bring the stage up to a high standard of moral purity been successful. The experiment, once made in Boston, of so managing a theatre as to exclude every indelicacy from the stage and every notoriously improper person from the audience, ended in a pecuniary failure. The puritanic playhouse soon went into bankruptcy. The chief object of the manager is to make money; and if he can spice his evening entertainment with a plot that turns on a seduction or with a scene of sexual passion or with a salacious exposure of physical beauty, the temptation is very often too strong to be resisted.

You must take the average stage as it is, and not as you would like to have it. It is an institution which, if you patronize it, you become morally responsible for—as much as if you were to patronize a public library or a public drinking-saloon. As an institution it habitually un-

sexes woman by parading her in man's attire before a mixed audience. Too often it exposes her in such a pitiable scantiness of any attire at all that if you saw your own sister in such a plight you would turn away your eyes in horror. Yet you propose to pay your money, through the box-office, to somebody else's sisters and daughters to violate womanly delicacy for your entertainment. If "the daughter of Herodias" dances to please you, then you are responsible for the dance in its influence on both the dancer and your own moral sense. There is no evading, before God, your accountability for the theatre if you habitually support it. What its influence upon the average performer is appears from most abundant testimony. One of the most celebrated actresses of this time informed a friend of mine that she "enters a theatre only to enact her part, and has very little association with her own profession." A converted actor once said to me, while passing a playhouse in which he had often performed, "Behind those curtains lies Sodom." Although sorely pressed to return to his old bus-

iness, he said he would starve sooner than go on the stage again. Mrs. Frances Kemble Butler—the last living representative of the most famous histrionic family of modern times—has in her old age emphatically condemned the stage. As an institution the American theatre tolerates sensual impurity in its performers and presents scenes of impurity to its patrons. If you become one of its patrons, you go into moral partnership with the theatre.

Second. It would be a sufficient condemnation of the average playhouse if it stimulates one evil passion. But other temptations lurk about it. There are dangerous associations to be encountered there. It is a prevalent habit with young people who attend the theatre to remain until a late hour amid the excitement of the plays, and then to finish off with a midnight supper or a wine-drink at some neighboring restaurant. To this perilous practice a young lady of my acquaintance owed her downfall. Long after sensible people have laid their heads on their pillows the *habitués* of the theatre are apt to be add-

ing a second scene of dissipation to the first one. It must be pretty hard work for a Christian to finish up such an evening's experience with an honest prayer for God's blessing. That is indeed a poor business and a poor pleasure on which we cannot with a clear conscience ask our Heavenly Father's approval. Certainly there are enough innocent, wholesome, and beneficial recreations without venturing into the dangerous atmosphere of the playhouse. That is a dear-bought pleasure which involves even a risk to the immortal soul.

Third. Another peril of the theatre arises from the fascination which it too often engenders. Like wine-drinking, it becomes an appetite, and a very greedy appetite. To gratify this growing passion for the playhouse tens of thousands of young people most profusely squander their money and their time. Other and purer recreations become tame and insipid. Even the entertainments of the stage become dull unless they are spiced with new excitements to the passions. Wholesome pleasures cease to please, just

as a brandy-drinker ceases to be satisfied with cold water or a cup of coffee. It is not recreation but stimulation—and a very dangerous sort of stimulation too—that you will be after when you become enslaved by the fascinations of the stage.

My young friends, be assured that no sagacious employer ever chooses a clerk or an accountant, or any other employé, the sooner because he is a theatre-goer. No sensible man is apt to select the companion of his heart and home because she is a frequenter of a playhouse. No wise Christian mother wants her sons and daughters there. No pastor expects his youthful church members to go into that impure atmosphere without a terrible damage to their piety. I do not believe that the theatre has helped many souls towards heaven; I know that it has sent thousands to perdition.

Now that I have in kind and candid plainness of speech pointed out some of the inevitable perils of the playhouse, ought you to take the risk?

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

"For my sake." These three little words are the touchstone of love. The application of this touchstone begins with infancy and ends only with the end of life. If that baby in the mother's arms could speak intelligently it would say, "It is for my sake that a mother's eye watches unsleeping through the midnight hours and her arms hold me until they are ready to drop off for weariness." "For my sake" many a successful man acknowledges gratefully that his parents toiled and economized in order to buy books and pay college bills. "For my sake" provides the sheltering roof and the arm-chair for dear old grandma at the fireside. Take these three words out of our language and you would rob home of its sweetness and human life of some of its noblest inspirations.

Our divine Master made these words the text

of several of his most impressive injunctions. "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." To newly-converted Saul of Tarsus the first message is, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Again and again the early disciples were exhorted to bear crosses bravely for Jesus' sake. Christ came into this world to save us from our sins, and chiefly to save us from the abominable and damning sin of selfishness. The one motive that has the power to lift us out of self and to exalt life to its highest and holiest phase is heart-love for a crucified Saviour. "Love Me more than houses or lands or wife or children," is the first condition of discipleship. No soul is truly converted until it cuts loose from self-righteousness and accepts Jesus Christ as the only ground of salvation. Conversion signifies that self has grounded its arms in its very citadel and has surrendered the keys of the heart to the conquering Saviour. Henceforth it inscribes "for Christ's sake" on its banner. The shortest and most comprehensive confession of faith

that any Christian can phrase is about in these words: "It is Christ's business to save me; it is my business to serve Christ."

> "Saviour, teach me day by day
> Love's sweet lesson to obey;
> Sweeter lesson cannot be,
> Loving him who first loved me."

The Master never allowed the supreme test of loyalty to him to be a mere emotion, however fervid. It was a practical test. "If ye love me, *keep my commandments.*" Write these decisive words upon the walls of every prayer-room, to rebuke the rant and the rhapsodies in which too many windy professors indulge, while their honest debts remain unpaid and their own children sneer at the pious sham. It is not how many promises we make, but how many commandments we obey; it is not how many tears we shed, but how many sins we renounce; it is not how many sacraments we observe, but how many deeds we do for the Master's sake, that decides the genuineness of our Christianity. Evermore is the eye of our loving Saviour upon us, and ever-

more is that voice saying unto us, "Live for me; take up this cross for my sake." When we are sore tempted to an act of retaliation or to some sharp scheme that selfishness has varnished over with falsehood, that rebuking voice accosts us: "Wound me not in the house of my friends." Sometimes a suffering servant of Jesus comes to us for a proof of sympathy that costs more than smooth words. Selfishness begins to mutter about "impostors" and "no end to these calls of charity." But He who died for both of us whispers gently, "Do it unto me. He is one of my suffering children. Help him for my sake." There is not a negro freedman who solicits aid for his struggling church, or a hungry stranger who knocks at our door for bread; there is not a poor widow that asks for a dollar to pay her rent, or a neglected child running in rags and recklessness to ruin for want of a friend, but ever the same voice is saying to us, "Give to them for my sake. Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these, ye do it unto me."

One of the little orphan boys in John Falk's

German charity school repeated at the supper-table their usual grace, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest and bless the food thou hast provided." A lad looked up and said, "Tell us, teacher, why the Lord Jesus never comes." "Dear child, only believe, and you may be sure that he will come to us some of these times, for he always hears us." "Then," replied the bright lad, "I'll set a chair for him;" and he put one by the table. By-and-by a knock was heard at the door. A poor travelling apprentice was admitted and asked for food and lodging. The little fellow looked at the stranger a few moments and then piped out, "Ah, I see! Jesus could not come to-night and so he sent this poor young man in his place. Is that the way, teacher?" "Yes, my boy, that is just it. Every cup of water or bit of bread we give to the poor and hungry for Jesus' sake we give to Him. Inasmuch as we do it to the least of our brethren, we do it unto our Saviour."

There are a thousand applications of this principle of self-denial for Christ's sake. Grand old

Paul had it in his mind when he wrote, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is made weak." It is not easy for a true Christian to keep this text in his Bible and to keep a bottle on his table. They do not harmonize. The bottle means temptation. The text means that things which are not always sinful *per se* should be cheerfully given up for the sake of others; and the legal liberty of the man or woman whose heart is in the right place will never be exercised when a moral evil may flow from such exercise. We have no right to put a stumbling-block in the path of others. As a Christian I am bound to surrender every self-indulgence which works directly against the best interests of my fellowmen, especially if it endangers precious souls for whom Jesus died. This principle gives to the doctrine of total abstinence from intoxicants a broad Bible basis as solid as the Hudson Palisades.

The two unanswerable arguments against the drinking usages are these: An alcoholic beverage

endangers me if I tamper with it; it endangers my fellow-man if I offer it to him. My Bible teaches me to let it alone for the sake of the "weak" and those who stumble. Ah, those stumblers! How many wrecks the word reveals! How many tombs it opens whose charitable turf hides out of sight what surviving kindred would love to hide from memory! For Jesus' sake and for the sake of the easily tempted who will hide behind our example, let us who call ourselves Christians put away this bottled devil which conceals damnation under its ruby glow. This subject of self-surrender for Jesus' sake is as wide as the domain of Christian duty. To live for Christ is the sweetest and holiest life we can live; to live for self is the most wretched. Every cross is turned into a crown, every burden becomes a blessing, every sacrifice becomes sacred and sublime, the moment that our Lord and Redeemer writes on it, "*For my sake.*"

CONSECRATION.

AMONG the many passages in the Old Testament whose translation is vitally improved in the new Revision is the following verse in the first book of the Chronicles: "Who then offereth willingly to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord?" King David propounded this question to the people of Israel when he was about undertaking the noble project of rearing a magnificent temple to Jehovah. He called for contributions of money and of labor. There was to be no enforced draft of either men or money; every gift was to be spontaneous and offered willingly. It is the same thought which Paul presents when he exhorts us, "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord." The overmastering love of Christ in the soul will make hard labors light and unwelcome tasks agreeable and sacrifices prompt and cheerful. "Plunged into the at-

mosphere of love, the dim flame of obedience will burn more brightly, like a lamp plunged into a jar of pure oxygen."

The very word "consecration" savors of pious cant in the estimation of some people, because they have heard it glibly used by certain sentimental Christians in a cheap and flippant fashion. Rightly felt and practised, it is the very essence of healthy, holy, and happy piety. God has a sovereign right to us; in every sweet breath of his pure air, in every object of beauty our eyes behold, in every line of his precious Word, in every step of his providential care, in every heart-joy at the mercy-seat, in every promise fulfilled and grace imparted, we discover a new obligation to be the Lord's. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price;" these solemn, tender words seal the claim of our crucified Master. Christ for me, and I for Christ, is the very core of honest self-consecration.

To be worth anything this must begin with and centre in the *heart*. The whole undivided soul must be surrendered to Him who died to re-

deem the soul. Christ will not take up with a closet or a corner. He demands the complete surrender of the will, the faculties, and the affections. A hundred half-Christians cannot make a single whole one. The more heart there is in our religion, the more joy, the more power, the more victory. Nobody succeeds in what is undertaken grudgingly; the successful men have always been, like Paul, men of one idea. "This *one* thing I do;" "For me to live is Christ." The paramount purpose with Isaac Newton was star-eyed science; he waited at the posts of her doors until she taught him how to weigh the globe. Love of his art held Joshua Reynolds to his easel for twenty unbroken hours till he had caught the coveted conception on his canvas. The great, rugged Scotch soul of Livingstone was already among the heathen of the Dark Continent before he carried his body thither for martyrdom. The more of your heart you give to Jesus the more will Jesus give you of himself.

In reading the biographies of many of the most vigorous and effective Christians we have

been struck with the fact that at the outset they entered into a solemn, sincere covenant of self-consecration. Something like this has been the spirit if not always the actual language of their dedication of themselves to God: "Oh, heart-searching God and Father, thou hast a right to me, as my Creator and Preserver, and as having given thy Son to be my Saviour. I thank thee that eternal life has been offered to me through his atoning death, that the Holy Spirit has drawn my heart unto thee, and that thou hast called me to thy blessed service. May the Lord Jesus Christ dwell in my heart by his Spirit, and purify me and fill me unto all the fulness of God! Unto thee I do consecrate my heart, my body, my time, my possessions, my influence—all I am and all I hope to have in this world or another. Teach me how to serve thee, and may I never grow weary in doing thy holy will. Let thy Word abide in me in all wisdom and thy grace ever be sufficient for me. Make me steadfast in faith, perfect in love, and abundant in labor; and when this poor heart shall cease to

pulsate on earth, grant me a gracious admission as a sinner saved into the higher, holier service of thy heavenly kingdom—for Jesus' sake."

Whoever can in humble sincerity make this consecration of himself to God has taken the great initial step towards a healthy and happy Christian life. When the heart is given to Christ and given without reserve or compromise, all other things will be quite sure to follow. "Holiness to the Lord" will be stamped on them as a merchant stamps his trade-mark on his wares. Such practical questions as, What work shall I engage in, how much time shall I devote, and how much money shall I give? will be settled by a conscience of which Christ is King. *Christ will get the best.* The first-fruits will not be locked up in the granary or the fattest sheep killed for the table of selfishness. The whole week will not be monopolized for business or household duties and a hurried ten minutes be snatched for private prayer or a sleepy hour be grudgingly given to a devotional meeting. If there is a bright, intellectual son in the family,

the first thought will not be to enter him in the race for wealth or fame or splendid station, but this other thought—May not Jesus Christ have a use for this brain and tongue in preaching his glorious gospel? There are some of us ministers who in heaven will thank a godly mother for having made this very choice for us and for having consecrated us from infancy to this "high calling." There are very many other ways in which a man may serve God outside of a pulpit; but Jesus Christ ought to have the "pick" in our schools and colleges, and back of that in our homes and households. No young man or woman ever consecrated himself or herself to the work of saving souls and helping their fellow-creatures Godward and was sorry for it.

The question "Where shall I find a field of labor for Christ?" must be settled by the other considerations—"What am I best fitted for? and Where am I most needed?" Mary Lyon's injunction to her pupils at Mt. Holyoke was worthy of Paul himself: "Young ladies, in choosing your place of labor *go where nobody else is will-*

ing to go." That sentence is as near like Holy Scripture as Abraham Lincoln's "With malice towards none, with charity for all."

The amount of our property to be consecrated to purposes of benevolence should be left to a prayer-enlightened conscience. If Christ keeps the check-book and the key of the purse, then he will get his due share. But not a dollar should be given to charity which is demanded by honest indebtedness. "Owe no man anything but to love one another" is a divine rule whose claim is as binding as the claim of God's treasury. The Bible rule is that every one should give "as God hath prospered him;" in other words, according to his means. This puts the poor widow's mites on a par with the millions of a rich donor. The most effective way of consecrating money is to bestow it systematically—just as the river Nile gives so much water and just so much soil and rice-crop every year. But, good friends, after you and I have consecrated our whole selves and all our possessions, we shall still meet our Lord in heaven as *poor debtors.*

MORE ABUNDANT LIFE.

He is a poor specimen of a Christian who is satisfied to be to-day no better than he was yesterday. To be barely alive is not enough. Jesus promises to all his blood-bought disciples that they shall have "life *more abundantly*." We give away to impenitent sinners or to seeking souls some precious promises which belong to true believers. "A new heart will I give you; a new spirit will I put within you." Such promises reach beyond inquiry-rooms; they are for every-day consumption by us who claim to be Christians. We need to have a new heart again and again, just as our faces require frequent washing and our bodies require frequent feeding. Christ is an inexhaustible fountain-head of life, and it depends upon ourselves as to how much of this divine life shall stream into our souls.

1. One of the indications of an increased

Christ-life in the soul will be more *vigor*. I have a tree in my yard that used to issue its promissory notes in May, and failed to redeem them with more than a handful of fruit in August. It shook down its beautiful white blossoms in the spring, and that about exhausted it. I dug about it and applied a strong fertilizer, and now it fills a big basket with delicious pears. So does our Master often deal with us. He puts in the plough of sharp providences that make tearing work about the roots and dislodge the vermin of besetting sins. With the trials come the strengthening graces. When a man's system is in a low, impoverished condition he is apt to catch any fever that is a-going. So it is a low spiritual life that breeds worldliness and stinginess and censoriousness and other acute attacks of sinful lusts. With a sick soul, as with a sick body, the problem often is whether there is vitality enough inside to slough off the disease. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," said Jesus when Simon Peter was in a bad way; but for imparted grace that ugly attack in Pilate's

Hall might have been the end of poor Peter. When he got the more abundant vigor of Christ's Spirit he went through tenfold greater dangers unharmed. Why should any Christian be merely gasping when he ought to be "strengthened with all power in his inner man, according to the might" of Christ Jesus? The more vigor we desire the more we shall receive, and the more we receive the more we will be able to receive.

2. A second evidence of increased life is an increase of *faith.* A small faith can move mole-hills; a stalwart faith can remove mountains. It is the feebleness of the grip on God that makes it so hard for us to stand the heavy strains or to lift the heavy loads. This is the reason why some parents and teachers produce no impression on the young hearts committed to them; for this same reason many pastors reap no harvests. "According to your *faith* be it unto you." That is Christ's mode of measurement. Mr. Spurgeon tells us of a fervent, fearless preacher who went into a region where wickedness abounded. In

one of his first sermons he said, "Now you may squirm and scoff as much as you will, but I tell you that before a twelvemonth hundreds of you will be converted. I have asked the Lord for this, and he will give it to me." And the Lord did give him what he looked for and labored for; within less than a year there were six hundred conversions. Faith signifies the grappling union of the soul with the Almighty Saviour. The closer the connection the more power flows in. A current of electricity sent through a huge horseshoe magnet will enable it to support a weight of a thousand pounds; stop the current, and the weight drops instantly. The more abundant our faith the fuller will be the inflow of Christ. Paul's secret was just this: "Not I, but Christ that liveth in me; and the life I live I live by *faith* on the Son of God.'

3. If Christ be in us more abundantly there will be a great influx of joy. None of us is as happy as he or she might be. Some Christians carry such a doleful countenance and cheerless atmosphere that if they should venture to urge a

friend to come to Christ the answer might very properly be, "No, I thank you. I have troubles enough of my own without adding to them such a forlorn religion as yours." Such Christians cheat themselves out of their birthright. Jesus assures us that his joy may remain in us and that our joy may be full. Raptures are not always vouchsafed even to the healthiest disciple. But a healthy man will enjoy eating a ripe peach; a loving wife enjoys a husband's kiss; and there must be something wrong with a man or woman who professes to feed on Christ and to do Christ's will, and yet finds no delight in it. How can we have Jesus in our souls and yet feel no joy? Just as soon expect to find an aviary full of canaries and goldfinches and larks that should be as silent as a tomb. Joy is love looking at its treasures. The richer we become in Christ's presence now and the expectation of dwelling with him for ever, the more investments we make in doing good to others and in saving souls, the more abundant will be the casket of our jewels. When a person says to me, "I don't enjoy my reli-

gion," the proper reply is, "Then you cannot have enough religion to enjoy. Get fuller of Christ, and he will put the sunshine into your soul and the song into your mouth."

4. Another token of increased life will be an increased resistance to sin and a quickening of *conscience* in every-day transactions. One of the most lamentable lacks in too many church members is the lack of a sensitive, healthy conscience. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after *righteousness*," said our Lord. We talk of this brother or that one as "weak;" but in ethics to be weak is to be wicked. It is just these weak professors who are bringing shame on the name of Christianity. Religious motives may burn brightly in prayer-meeting, but be blown out like a candle as soon as a strong wind of temptation strikes them in the open air. Dr. Hodge said of a certain eminent Christian, "He was not only pious, he was *good*." A true distinction that. Now if the Lord Jesus dwell in our hearts more abundantly, the moral sense will be quickened, the heart will be cleaner, and in that holy

atmosphere fraud and falsehood and greed and sophistry and injustice cannot breathe. When questions of right and wrong arise we will give Christ the casting vote. Our whole daily conduct will be straightforward and by the air-line, because we give the helm into the hand of Him with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.

Are all these graces of faith, power, joy, love, and practical godliness attainable? Of course they are. Yonder tree has been made luxuriant in foliage and germs of fruit by simply drawing the vital sap up into trunk and boughs. Even so, if you will let Christ have unhindered flow into your will and your affections, you will be not barren or unfruitful, but will *abound* in the work of the Lord. Take a *large* life with you into heaven.

PREPAID PRAYERS.

I MET with this expression lately; and while it is open to criticism, it suggests a vitally important truth, a truth also which many good people ignore, and therefore their prayers are unproductive of any blessings. If we expect a letter to reach its destination we *prepay* it; if we do not value it enough to put a two-cent stamp on it, then the document is left in the limbo of the dead-letter office. It is a lamentable fact that there is a *dead-prayer* office also, and the number of well-worded and orthodox petitions which are more likely to go thither than to reach the ear of the infinite Love is past calculation.

All valuable things are costly. What we call "*free* salvation" cost the Son of God all the humiliations of his earthly mission and all the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha. Nor can any sinner obtain the benefit of Christ's atone-

ment except at the price of personal obedience to the Saviour. Our Lord wrapped up a very profound and practical truth in that parable of the man who, desiring to possess the "treasure hid in a field," gladly sold all he had and went and *bought* that field. No one can secure the salvation of his soul unless he or she is willing to pay the price which God demands; that price is the renunciation of the most darling sins and the surrender of the heart and the life to Jesus Christ. If you want Christ himself, you must give Christ yourself. Here is the pinch that keeps millions out of heaven. It kept out Felix and Agrippa and all others who have been unwilling to submit to God's terms. "You must give up your bottle or give up your soul," said a plain-spoken pastor to a gentleman in his inquiry-room. The poor slave of the drink hesitated, and then went away clinging to his decanter! The decisive battle for salvation is commonly fought over the favorite sins; for the Master has declared that unless a man *deny self* and take up his cross, he cannot be His disciple.

The same principle applies to a vast portion of all our prayers. All valuable things cost something, and petitions to God are no exception to the rule. Prayer is a process in which two parties are concerned—the human petitioner and the divine bestower of blessings. All God's promises have their conditions; we must comply with those conditions, or we cannot expect the blessings coupled with the promises. No farmer is such an idiot as to found his expectation of a crop of wheat on God's general promise of seed-time and harvest, and yet put in no plough and sow no grain. He first does his part, and then can reasonably ask the God of nature to give him a harvest. In prayer we must do our part if we expect that the infinite Giver will do his part; there is a legitimate sense in which all of us are to do our utmost in the answering of our own petitions.

At a missionary convention a venerated minister was called upon to offer a prayer. He halted and began to fumble in his pocket. "Father A——, they want you to pray," whispered

somebody in his ear. "Yes, yes," replied the wise old man, "but I cannot pray until I have given something." After he had contributed his quota towards sending abroad the gospel he could with a clear conscience implore the King of heaven to give that gospel wide sweep and sway. The old man prepaid his prayer. For the Christian churches of this age to offer the petition, "Thy kingdom come!" and then expend only ten millions (the world over) in the enterprise of Foreign Missions, looks almost like a solemn farce. As far as God's people are willing to prepay their prayers by bestowing money and talents and toils for the conversion of the world, just so far are their prayers answered. God has no blessings for stingy pockets. A great deal of the "talk of the lips" in prayer-meetings is mere talk, and it "tendeth to penury."

What is true of pecuniary sacrifices as an evidence of sincerity is equally true of personal efforts. Often when I listen to requests for prayer for the conversion of a husband or a son or a Sabbath scholar, I say to myself, "How much is

that person *doing* for the conversion of that husband or child or scholar?" The Christian wife who does her utmost to make her daily religion attractive to her unconverted husband prepays her own prayer. She works with the Holy Spirit—not against Him. A noble woman in my church was instrumental in the conversion of her whole Bible-class; she prepaid her prayer for them by the most winsome personal efforts for their salvation. God never defaults; but he demands that we prove our faith by our works, and that we never ask for a blessing that we are not ready to labor for. Much of the pious prattle in prayer-meetings for a "revival" comes to nothing because the one who utters the empty formula is not *reviving himself*. He pretends to ask the Almighty to do what he will not lift one lazy finger for; such prayer is a severe self-condemnation. Let us all beware lest our own prayers rise up in judgment against us.

Genuine, fervent, self-denying, and effective prayer is always prepaid. The offerer of it is willing to make any sacrifice in order to secure

the blessing sought. If time or money or labor or penitential putting away of sin or any other condition be required, the condition is cheerfully performed. In brief—every prayer may be said to be prepaid for whose fulfilment we are ready, at whatever cost, to coöperate with the divine Spirit.

A CHRISTIAN'S STAYING POWER.

A ROBUST Christian was the apostle James. There is a tradition that he prayed until his knees were as hard as the knees of a camel, and that the good people in Jerusalem vied with each other in touching the hem of his robe. From Jerusalem he sent out an epistle to his dispersed brethren which reads like the bulletin of a field-marshal, and the opening sentences have the ring of a bugle. "Hail, brethren!" he exclaims, "count it all joy when ye fall into manifold trials, knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work." The Greek word here translated "patience" literally signifies *staying:* then it came to mean persistent endurance, whether in active exertion or under acute suffering. It is the *staying power* of the rower in a boat-race, of the warrior in a fierce battle charge, and of the porter weighed down by a heavy burden.

Patience, which is one of the grandest of the Christian graces, is often dwarfed into a mere stoical submission akin to that of a savage tortured at the stake. What passes for patience with some people is rather a callousness of heart. Under severe trials the sensibilities have become as callous as the horny hands of a furnace-man in handling hot iron. A widow, who after the death of her husband had lost two children, said to her pastor, "That first gri ˙made such a huge hole in my heart that it has never held any sorrow since that time." From such sullen apathy which is past feeling the superb staying power of a true Christian is as far removed as faith is from blind credulity. Our blessed Lord was keenly sensitive to suffering, but how unflinchingly he endured the severe strain of dealing with the sick and the suffering, the bigoted and the ungrateful! Homeless, he never complained; under the vexations of his crude disciples and irritating opponents he never lost temper; the most fiendish assaults of his persecutors never wrung a murmur from his lips. His silence was

sublimer than any other man's utterances. At the end of his life of humiliation he leaves only a handful of acknowledged followers, calmly assured that out of that little band of disciples would germinate the Christianity which shall yet dominate the globe! Patience had its perfect work with him. It is one of the most Christly qualities in a well-developed religious life.

I have been watching the careers of young men by the thousand in this busy city for over thirty years, and I find that one chief difference between the successful and the failures lies in the single element of *staying power*. Permanent success is oftener won by holding on than by sudden dash, however brilliant. The easily discouraged who are pushed back by a straw are all the time dropping to the rear, to perish or be carried along on the stretcher of charity. They who understand and practise Abraham Lincoln's homely maxim of "pegging away" have achieved the solidest success. It was the honest boast of an eminent New Yorker that the first dollar he ever earned was for hammering down

paving stones in the street, and that went to the captain of the sloop who brought him a penniless youth to the city. Oliver Wendell Holmes' couplet describes in a rather coarse and carnal fashion what is vital Christian grace:

> "Stick to your aim; the mongrel's hold may slip,
> But crowbars can't unloose the mastiff's grip."

If staying power is indispensable in all secular pursuits, it is even more so in the spiritual life. Young converts come into our churches by platoons, especially in seasons of revival. Many fall into the fatal delusion that the main thing is done; whereas it is only begun. They have enlisted for Christ; they have, if genuine converts, won the first battle. But the life-campaign is yet before them. The hardest fighting, my young brother, will not be with the hostile forces in a wicked world, but with your *own self*. To stand the sneers of scoffers requires some courage; to resist the undercurrents of temptation requires the strong anchorage of godly principle. But the mastery of yourself is the great achievement. To hold temper in perfect control,

to keep base passions subdued, to keep your powers and purposes true and straight to the one purpose of serving, obeying, and honoring Jesus Christ—this is the secret of a strong Christian life. The Revised Version of the New Testament brings out this idea beautifully in the passage "In your *patience* ye shall win your souls." Before you can win anybody else's soul to Christ you must "win" your own. This can only be accomplished by steady conflict with sin, by completely joining your weakness to the almighty strength of your Saviour. Christ's mastery of you will give you self-mastery.

Paul did not claim to be a perfect man; but he had a prodigious staying power. "I keep my body under," he exclaims. As a boxer who is in a sharp encounter, he constantly beats down with steady and sturdy blows the unruly appetites and lusts. The moment that a Christian lets the carnal nature get the upper hand he is overthrown. Nor can he hold down the "old man" of sin except as he holds to Christ and is held by him. Let every young convert

carefully and squarely count the cost of a vigorous, successful Christian life; it need not discourage or appall him; yet he will be pretty sure to become an early deserter unless he equips himself for a life-campaign under the Captain of his salvation.

Impatience is the prevailing sin of the times; impatience to be suddenly rich, impatience under restraint, impatience with slow and thorough processes. A Christian character is no more to be finished in a day than was one of Thorwaldsen's statues. You have got to learn patience by some sharp disappointments. You have not learned the prime secret of acceptable prayer if you have not learned to "*wait* quietly on the Lord." We cannot either scold or tease our Heavenly Father into granting our desires. Faith has nothing to do with fretting, either under a hard lot or under the delays of prayed-for blessings. Patient prayer is powerful prayer. If thou hast come into Christ's school, submit to his lessons and his tasks; one of them is—"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

This virtue of holding on is absolutely indispensable to all successful Christian work. How many volunteers are constantly dropping out of our Sabbath-school teacherships and out of mission work as soon as the novelty is off! How many ministers are begging for release from "*hard* fields," some of them ready to run when God may be just ready to send the shower to start the seed they have sown! Too much of the Christian labor in our land ends in a spasmodic *spirt* of enthusiasm. "Well-doing" comes to nothing unless there be "patient continuance" in it. Brethren, let us remember that Christian patience is not only a waiting on God, it is a steady working for God. *Christ in us is the only staying power.* The soldier who stands fire to the last shot wins the victory. And up yonder they who are arrayed in the white robes are they who "came out of great tribulations." "Here is the *patience* of the saints; here are they that kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus!"

BRIGHT CHRISTIANS.

THE houses of the people of Palestine in ancient times were not lighted by candles; therefore the translation of the fifteenth verse of the fifth chapter of Matthew in our common version is not correct. In the house of the poorest peasant was a lamp. A small cup or other vessel was filled with oil, a bit of linen rag or a wick was set afloat in it, and the simple contrivance was set on a lamp-stand. To put it under a couch or to hide it under a grain measure would be absurd. Our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, alludes to the familiar lamp in every dwelling, and then says to his followers, "*So* let your light shine before men." This is the manner in which every Christian should be luminous. The word "so" refers back to the previous verse. The motive for doing this then follows, namely, "that men may see your good works and glorify

your Father which is in heaven." Not for mere ostentation and self-glorification were they to make a display of their religion, neither were they to conceal it by either indolence or cowardice.

The crying want of the times is more *bright Christians.* There are quite too many church members who were kindled for a little while—perhaps during the heat of a revival season—and then the light has either been smuggled into a dark lantern, or else allowed to die down into a feeble glimmer, barely visible through the smoke. For no merely selfish purpose does Jesus Christ bestow his converting grace upon any man. He touched your heart with his illuminating grace chiefly that you might impart the benefit of your light to others and glorify him. He commanded the light to shine into the darkness of your sinful soul that you might *give* the light of the knowledge of God as seen in the face of Jesus to all with whom you come in contact. You may not be a magnificent Fresnel-burner like a Chalmers or a Wesley in their day, or like a Spurgeon or a Shaftesbury or a Dodge in

our times. But the properties of light are the same in a household lamp that they are in the huge luminary that flashes from the tower at Sandy Hook; and in your little circle there is just as much need of a bright Christian as there is in the most conspicuous pulpit of Christendom.

If you neglect to let your light shine, however humble it may be, not only will your own character suffer, but somebody else will be the worse for it. The simple failure of a signal-man to swing his lantern at the right time has sent a railway train into deadly ruin. Your failure to utter the right word, to do the right thing, or to exert the right influence, may be sending some others off the track in the same fatal fashion. I know of certain households—perhaps yours may be one—in which the lamp smokes more than it shines. That son would not be so troubled with skepticism if he saw a more attractive living evidence of Christianity in the daily conduct of his professedly Christian parents. Another son would not be seen so often on his way to the

saloon or some other dangerous haunt if the torch of both warning and example were held up faithfully and lovingly. It is almost hopeless to expect conversions in some families. One reason is that there is a lamp of profession there which smokes foully instead of beaming brightly. The light that is in that house is fast becoming darkness. The oil has given out. Love of the world, or the greed of selfishness or some other sin, has extinguished the love of Christ. The real cause of all spiritual declension is the lack of a Christly love and loyalty in the heart. When people are full of any subject they will speak out; they cannot help it. When your soul is on fire with the love of Jesus and of your fellow-men, you will burn and shine unconsciously. Probably the most effective good which most genuine Christians do is in the way of steady, silent, and unconscious reflection of Jesus Christ in their daily conduct. To preach a sermon or teach a mission-school class, or distribute Bibles or bread among the needy, is a direct, premeditated act of lamp-bearing. But to live along day

after day luminously reflecting Christ in word and deed at home, in the store, in the shop, and everywhere else, is just "*letting* the light shine" of its own sweet accord. That is the sort of religion that tells. And however glibly Brother A—— may speak in the prayer-meeting or however brightly Sister B—— may shine in her Dorcas Society or "holiness meeting," yet if they end in smoke at home, theirs is but a dark and dreary dwelling. Trim the household lamp, good friends. A revival of thorough *home piety* is the most needed revival in these times for the well-being of both church and commonwealth.

Light is a combination of many rays, and each white ray a combination of many colors. If you apply the spectrum to a bright Christian you will find that he sheds out various graces. Chiefest of all is the ray of *love*. This is the supreme grace which most completely reflects Christ Jesus and which imparts the golden effulgence to a true, fervent Christian life. It is not a flash of sentiment or fitful gush of emotion, but

a steady anthracite flame, which glows all day and all night because the divine fire is burning in the soul. "So have I loved you," saith the Master; "continue ye in my love." Where this lamp beams the humblest home will be brightened, the hardest pillow will be softened, the coarsest fare will be sweetened. Love is the best grace Christ can give us, for in it he gives himself. It is the best we can return to him, for in it we give ourselves.

A bright Christian will fling out the steady rays of *cheerfulness*. This is not an unsaintly quality; a dark, foggy day is not half as heavenly as a sunny day. The natural note of a bird is not a scream or a groan, but a spontaneous song. When a young man or woman becomes converted to Christ none of their companions ought to say, "They used to be pleasant, but how dull and mopy they are now!" Nor ought a Christian ever to enter any circle with the chill of an icicle or the depressing effect of a wet blanket. And there is another radiation which a bright Christian will emit, and that is *good*

temper. We too often think of ill temper as a constitutional weakness or a mere unhappy infirmity. Prof. Drummond has pungently said in one of his late addresses, "Ill temper is a sin, one of the blackest of sins; it is the symptom of an unloving nature at bottom. The man who has it needs to have his whole nature sweetened. Such a man would make heaven miserable; he must be born again before he can enter it."

Here are a few of the rays which a bright Christian will reflect while he is reflecting Christ. Trim your lamp, brother. Feed it afresh with prayer for more oil and with fresh inlettings of Jesus into your soul. Carry your lamp always with you as the miners carry theirs on their hats. The world may discover Jesus Christ in you when they would find him in no other way. Light other people's lamps. A bright Christian is a ray shot from the throne of heaven into this dark world. "Keep your loins girded and your lamps burning."

LABOR FOR SOULS.

"You know a great deal, Dr. Beecher," said a man to the Boanerges on Litchfield Hill, "but what is the greatest of all things?" The quick reply was, "It is not theology, it is not controversy; it is *saving souls.*" This has been the keynote with all the choicest spirits in Christ's army corps from the days of Paul, whose motto was, "If by all means I may save some of them." No one has come up to this high calling until he has learned to love an immortal soul irrespective of its trappings and surroundings—the soul of a beggar as much as that of a millionaire. David Brainerd—who may perhaps be regarded as the holiest man the American church has seen—had for his parish the red barbarians on the banks of the Delaware. "I care not," he says, "where I live or how I live or what hardships I go through, so that I can but gain souls

to Christ. While I am asleep I dream of these things; as soon as I awake, the first thing I think of is this great work. All my desire is the conversion of sinners, and all my hope is in God."

These are apples of gold for us pastors and for all living Christians. Not vague effort which ends in smoke, but direct effort brought to bear upon *a soul.* Men are saved or lost individually. The sagacious apostle did not evaporate the idea into any vague generalities about "reaching the masses," etc.; he distinctly says that "he who converteth *a sinner* from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins." A single soul was a sufficient audience for the Son of God at Sychar's well and in the inquiry room with Nicodemus.

To convert signifies to turn around and start in the opposite direction. Conversion is the penitent sinner's own act in turning from that path which leads hellward and setting his footsteps into the path of obedience to God. Regen-

eration is the work of the Holy Spirit, who influences and enables the sinner to turn. The divine Spirit and the human will work in blessed partnership; neither can do the work without the other. But the apostle James recognizes a third party when he speaks of one's converting a sinner from the error of his way. Then it appears that it is possible for me to convert my neighbor. Not, of course, that I can change his heart or regenerate him into the new life; a saved sinner is not, nor ever can be, a sinner's saviour. Jesus alone can be that. But I can bring an influence to bear upon my neighbor; I can ply him with arguments and entreaties; I can put God's claims before him; I can set gospel religion before him attractively by kind acts and consistent example; and so I may *move him to move himself* towards Christ. This is what we understand by a Christian's converting a soul. Self-conceited itinerants do, indeed, often boast of the number of *their* converts, which prove to be as worthless specimens as Whitefield's tipsy friend who claimed to be his convert. But still

the mighty fact remains, for God's Word declares it, that a servant of Jesus can convert a sinner from his evil way and thus save a soul from death.

This is a tremendous trust. No power vested in any human being can compare with this one of moving an immortal creature from the slavery of Satan and the doom of hell into a pathway of life everlasting. What a trust, brother! Think of it. Father, mother, teacher, Christian friend, just think what a stupendous prize God sets before you and what a prodigious responsibility He lays upon you! God seems to say to you, "Here is this immortal soul, worth more than all worlds, for Jesus died for it; here is this soul; now convert him unto Me. I put him in your way; I give you the opportunity; I will supply you with the help; save this precious soul!" This is not profanity, nor is it poetry. God does this very thing when he commissions his children to pray, toil, and live for the conversion of the lost. Nay, he declares that if we do not warn the sinner to turn from his wicked way, that soul

shall die in his iniquity, but "his blood will I require at thy hand!"

The threatening for unfaithfulness is as tremendous as the trust; the reward of fidelity is glorious enough to whet the appetite of an archangel. It will be a crown indeed to be laid at Jesus' feet if we discover even a single soul in heaven whom you or I have been instrumental in converting from the error of his way. We pity those who have no such star-crowns.

I am confident that we who call ourselves Christians do not begin to face these mighty facts as we ought; we do not set squarely before our eyes the *trust of souls* and our vast accountabilities for them. The more we do this the more intensely will we give ourselves to this most Christlike endeavor. Our own heart must first be moved for the one we may convert. Mere hap-hazard counts for nothing. Fix your eyes on the friend whom you mean to reach and to labor for. Take hold of that case as Harlan Page took hold of young Edwin F. Hatfield, with a grip of personal interest—loving him

enough to tell him plain truth. Watch opportunities; in doing do not overdo. He that winneth souls is wise because he first asks God to make him so. Worrying an unconverted friend by incessant "nagging" at him, preaching at him in a certain Pharisaic tone, or addressing him in a public way so as to mortify or disgust him—all such blunders show more zeal than common sense.

But remember that the most terrible blunder of all is to let a soul go to perdition without one effort to save it! It seems to me, sometimes, that it will be enough to make us half crazy in heaven not to find there some souls that we ought to have striven, yes, "agonized," to bring there. And there is no preparation for heaven that can compare with the unselfish, patient, prayer-steeped, and Christlike labor and life for perishing souls. The nearer a soul is to us, the greater the responsibility for it. May God help us all to follow "Weeks of Prayer" with many weeks of putting prayer into practice!

THE WISE AND WINSOME WALK.

THE early Christian church was born in a prayer-meeting, and baptized by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; it then set about its heaven-appointed mission of converting men to Christ. Peter's pungent sermon to the Jerusalem sinners pierced their hearts with conviction, and three thousand were converted in a single day. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is largely a record of personal labors for winning souls; the Epistles are not addressed to the heathen or to impenitent sinners, but to the newly-born churches, teaching them *how to live*. Instruction in the Christian life is the main topic of Paul and Peter, John and James. And one idea runs through them all, and that is that Christ's people are to live in such a way as not only to honor their Master, but in such a way as to attract the outside world to him.

"Walk in wisdom towards them that *are without*," was one of Paul's pithy and pungent injunctions. Christ came into this world to seek and to save those who were lost. His commission to his disciples was to go after the "outsiders" and to bring them in. That commission is as binding on Christians to-day as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Every one now who enters the church of Jesus Christ enters not only into peculiar relations with Christ, but into peculiar duties towards the unconverted. "Ye are my witnesses;" "Ye are the light of the world, so let your lights shine that ye may be seen of men." The outside world watches us sharply, and our Master intended that we should be watched. It is a stereotyped truth that the professed Christian is the world's Bible. He is the only Bible that the majority of outsiders ever look at. They form their impressions of Christianity, not as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, but as it is revealed in us. They do not study God's Bible, but they do study church members. Now, if we are the world's Bible, we

ought to live in such a way as not to require any commentary to explain us. If we are doorkeepers to the way of life and the fold of Christ, we are put there to attract the outsiders and draw them in—not to block the door and drive them off. Every inconsistent church member is guilty of a triple sin—first towards Christ, secondly towards his own soul, and then towards the impenitent whom he repels when he ought to be winning them.

1. What is a "wise walk towards them that are without"? In the first place it is such a walk as does not give the lie to our professions. We tell the unconverted that the religion of Jesus Christ will make them cheerful under trials, and then, perhaps, fall to fretting at Providence and put on a distressing gloom as soon as trials smite us in the face. We talk about patience, and lose temper under the first provocation. In the prayer-meeting we pray as if religion was the "one thing needful," but elsewhere live as if money-grabbing or social ambition were the chief end of our lives. What is all this but be-

lying our Christianity and disgusting other people with it? If in walking through an orchard we pick up a fair-looking apple, but on putting our teeth in it find it setting our teeth on edge, we fling it down and try no more from that tree. So the world tastes of Christians, and if they find them sour or bitter in temper or worm-eaten, they turn away in disgust and disappointment. "By your fruits shall men know you," says our Master. We must make our religion taste sweet if we want to recommend it to outsiders. When a man of the world says scoffingly, "One of your church members cheated me in trade," I feel that the wickedest part of the fraud was that he robbed the man of his respect for the religion of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a noble, honest, godly life is the most convincing sermon that can be delivered. Christ's people have got to *live* the world to him, or the world is lost.

2. We never can win outsiders by compromising with them. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you"—i. e., when the lovers of sin shall applaud you. A minister of Christ

may purchase his popularity at the dear price of losing all his influence over men's consciences. Human favor gained by connivance with wrong—in business, in politics, in social fashions—is treason to our Master. The people of the world *do not expect* Christians to do as they do. When we surrender our principles they are secretly shocked and disgusted. If we would draw men out of a pit we must have a firm, strong foothold or they will draw us in. He who walks closest to Christ will have the most power to convert sinners to Him. When Jesus lives in us, it is not we who move others; it is the Christ incarnated in our conduct. "I tried to be a skeptic when I was a young man," said Cecil; "but my mother's life was too much for me." It was Jesus Christ in his good mother that converted him.

3. This subject has a vital bearing on all direct efforts for the conversion of the impenitent. "He that is *wise* winneth souls;" that is the correct reading of the often perverted text. It is astonishing to observe how little common

sense some good people exhibit in their well-meant efforts to bring their children or their scholars or their friends to the Saviour. A father will ask for prayers for an unconverted son, and then treat the boy so harshly or talk to him so tauntingly as only to harden him. Nothing requires more tact and gentleness and loving kindness than to converse with persons on the most vital of all questions. If we want to water a flower we don't dash a whole pailful on it and wash it out of the ground; we *sprinkle* it. God does not send his Spirit as a water-spout, but as a rain. Let us pray for wisdom when we are trying to win souls. Paul was consumed with zeal, and yet showed wonderful sagacity in adaptation to every case he took hold of.

We must watch for opportunities. "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without," says the apostle, "redeeming the time." The literal meaning of the phrase is "*buying the opportunity.*" Chances must be sought for to put in the right word; and when God gives us the chance we must make the most of it. Here was the se-

cret of Harlan Page's wonderful success in winning souls. He watched for opportunities and then spoke a very plain, close-fitting truth in a very loving way. There was no cant about him. The Spirit of God helped him, as he will always help us if we aim to please our Master.

We must go on the principle *now or never*. This will make us eager to embrace opportunities; and in turn we must urge the impenitent to accept Christ at once. Every act of kindness we can do to the unconverted may help to give us a key to their hearts. Then let us use it to introduce our Master there. They that are wise in their walk and wise in their work may turn many to righteousness.

KEEPING THE EYE ON JESUS.

ONE of the peculiar glories of Christianity is that it presents to us a perfect Model for our daily conduct. No other religion can produce a Lord Jesus Christ. And Christ is Christianity. It is not the gospel system that saves us; it is the gospel's Redeemer. That preaching is the most effective which most clearly and persuasively presents Jesus as the divine Saviour, Substitute, and Surety; that life is the most symmetrical and holy which is the most closely copied after him as the divine Model.

There is not a more beautiful episode in the life of our Lord than that one which occurred at the beginning of his last supper with his disciples, when he did what none but a slave was wont to do: he washed his disciples' feet! Having performed this wonderful act of humility and un-

selfishness, he says to them, "I have given you *an example*, that ye should do as I have done to you." Not that we are literally to wash each other's feet; but we are to fill each other's hands, bear each other's loads, dry each other's tears, and comfort each other's hearts.

Again, the enthusiastic Peter in his first Epistle tells us that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an *example*, that ye should follow his steps." The Greek word signifies a writing-copy to be closely imitated in every stroke of the pen. Paul has the same idea in his mind when he bids us to "look at Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith." And if I were asked to give a simple golden counsel to a young convert which could be easily remembered and which would be available for every emergency in life, it would be this: *Keep your eye on Jesus!*

The godly Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, kept a picture of the heroic missionary, Henry Martyn, hanging on the wall of his room. Looking up towards it he would often say, "There! See that blessed man! What an expression of

countenance! No one looks at me as he does. He seems always to be saying to me, 'Be serious; be in earnest; don't trifle.'" Then bowing towards the benign, thoughtful face of Martyn, Simeon would add, "No, I wont, I wont trifle."

If there was an inspiration to earnestness always to be caught from looking at a noble and Christlike man, how much more from looking at Christ himself. The divine Spirit has presented in the New Testament a matchless picture, and has hung it up, as it were, before our eyes. It is the infinitely beautiful countenance of my Lord and Master. It is "marred more than any other of the sons of men" by the traces of the struggle in Gethsemane and the agony on the cross. The most serene patience sits on that countenance, as when he "answered not a word" to Pilate, and as when he prayed, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." Every lineament of that face is love. Holiness spreads an ineffable grandeur over it which no Raphael or Da Vinci can reproduce. Ten thousand-fold more real, more inspiring, more soul-

rousing than any painting is the image to my eye of Him who ever says, "Look at me; learn of ME."

Yes, and how earnestly he says to us, "Live for me!" Sometimes we recoil from a disagreeable duty or a painful load. How promptly those lips of our Lord speak to us: "Whosoever will not take up his cross and come after me is not worthy of me." At another time we are cast down with disappointment; perhaps a chill of despair is settling over our hearts. Just then the dear divine face draws very close to us, and we hear the warm words, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Lo! I am with you alway. My grace is sufficient for thee." When we are tempted to a resentful word or a dishonest deed, the countenance rebukes us with the admonition, "Wound me not in the house of my friends." As Peter's tears were started by a single look of his grieved Master, so ours may well be stirred by every act of disloyalty to him. And when we have come back ashamed and disgraced from a cowardly de-

sertion of the right in an hour of sharp trial, oh, how that face upbraids us as Jesus seems to say, "Could ye not watch with me one hour!" Evermore is that divine Monitor and Model before our eyes, teaching, rebuking, inspiring, encouraging, comforting, and guiding us. Let me fasten my gaze on him! Let me open my ears to him! Let me be ever treading in his footsteps, that wherever he is I may be also!

Certain choice spirits of the human race have shone in some peculiar virtue, as Joseph in chastity, Daniel in integrity, Luther in courage, Wilberforce and Elizabeth Fry in philanthropy. But these were only imperfect copies of the divine ideal of life set before them. Let us keep our eyes steadfastly upon One who embraced in himself all virtues and excellences in full perfection, and who in every possible point is an example for us. Our daily and hourly conflict is with sin. Jesus did no sin, yet temptations came to him as really as they come to us, for he was a man beset just as we are. He conquered temptations by never presumptuously running into dan-

ger, by resisting first suggestions to evil, and by using that sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Christ is our model too in consecration to the Father's will. His meat was to perform that will. His untiring motto was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Between the activities of the Father in heaven and of the incarnate Son there was no discord and no jar. When I can lay down my daily plans of life upon God's revealed Word and find them fit, then what satisfaction does the humblest act bring to me! Ever too let us observe how utterly unselfish Jesus was: what journeyings to reach single cases of suffering; what braving of popular scorn to befriend the publican and the outcast; what endless expenditure of sympathy; what tireless going about doing good! When that gentle spirit of his was aroused by the sight of hypocrisy and falsehood, how he could scathe and scorch the Pharisee with his righteous indignation! Those overflowings of indignation were the surcharge of his holiness. When I behold

my Master anathematizing the "whited sepulchres" of sin, and yet pronouncing pardon on a penitent harlot, I learn just how I should keep in proper poise my hatred for iniquity and my pitying love for those who "are overtaken in a fault."

And so let every day of my life be spent before my great Teacher's face and my eyes never wander from that wonderful form! As soon let the drowning man forget the plank which sustains him in the sea as for me to forget the Saviour who upholds me with his omnipotent arm. As soon let the home-bound mariner lose sight of the lighthouse which guides him to his haven as for you and me to lose sight of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Reynolds used to say, "I only look at the best pictures. A bad one spoils my eye." In like manner shall we find that the study of our King in his beauty shall purify our vision; and the more we look at Jesus the more shall we look like Jesus.

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